

AN
EXPOSITION
WITH
Practical
OBSERVATIONS
UPON THE BOOK OF
ECCLESIASTES.

Written by Mr. ALEXANDER NISBET, Minister of the
Gospel at Irwin. *James Crauford is the owner of*



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EXPOSITION
OF THE
BIBLE
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE BOOK OF
ECCLESIASTES



By JOHN WILKINSON, Esq.
Author of the "Observations on the Book of Job"
in 2 Volumes, 8vo.

To the much Honour'd
WILLIAM NISBET
 OF
DIRLETON.

SIR,



THE Author of this Exposition, having Named Sir *John Nisbet* of *Dirleton* for Patron of it, as a Person of great worth, whose Friendship had been very useful to him; Upon the decease of that Eminent Lawyer, That Title designed for

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for him, cannot with more Equity be Addressed to any, than to you, upon whom he hath entailed his opulent Estate. And your having received a great part of your Education under him, and that sincerely Devout Lady now his Relick (a genuine *Scion* of a Noble and Religious Stock) with the Evidences you have given of answering their expectation, by an early Inclination to a Sober and Vertuous Life, and a magnanimous Contempt of vain and sinful Pleasures; These assure me you will intertain this New *Heir-ship*, not as an idle Ornament to your Closet, but as a notable Antidote against the Snares and Charms of these Honours, to which your Vertue and the affluence of your Fortune, seem to pave the
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the way. To prepare you for a cautious Encounter with these, you have here an accurat Map of all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory thereof, drawn originally by the Divinely-inspired Pen of *Solomon*, a *Wise King*, and a *Judicious Preacher*: The Author only illustrates it with Doctrines and Uses: Here you may survey these unfortunat Islands of Honour, Wealth, and Pleasure, upon which many have made Shipwrack of their most Holy Faith. And when you find this inferior World too low a Situation for true Paradise, and too barren a Soil to produce satisfaction to a Heaven-born Soul, lift up your panting Heart to the undiscovered Glories of the higher House, the Habitation of Angels,
and

6 *The Epistle Dedicatory.*

and the Saints everlasting Rest; where you will not need Commentaries upon a vain World, and a deceitful Heart, to Arm you against Mistakes and Disappointments: For there the *Preacher* will turn *Praiser*, *Annotations* will be silenced with *Alleluias*, and *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit* swallowed up in *fulness of Joy and Pleasures at Gods Right Hand for ever*. That these may be your never-fading Inheritance, after ye have tasted the greatest Happiness this World can afford, is the unfeigned Prayer of,

S I R,

Your sincerely devoted Servant,

Ja: Nisbet:

To the READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,

IF thou hast perused the former Labours of the Author of this ensuing Treatise, thou wilt readily be convinced that this Peice of his needs no Letters of Recommendation; these former Labours of his having been so universally acceptable, and to my certain knowledge now much desiderat, both at Home amongst our selves, and also in our Neighbouring Nation: And no wonder, for whoever have seen, and diligently perused these his Labours, have therein had a proof of the Author's great Judgement, and singular dexterity in Opening and Expounding the Scripture. Yet Custom hath made an Epistle of this nature some way necessary, and those concerned in the Publication have laid it upon me, because for the present, I labour in the same part of the Lord's Vineyard, where the Reverend Author (now with the Lord) formerly laboured. Therefore though I have had no small Aversation from this Undertaking, partly from my own Unfitness, and want of Qualifications sutable; and partly from the sense I have how little my Testimony can add to the Esteem of the Works of such a Man; and partly also, because such an Appearance is contrary to my own Genius and Inclination;

tion; yet I have been necessitat to overcome this Aversation: And my great Encouragement thereto is, what I have already mentioned, that the Author does not need my Recommendation, his own Works Praise him in the Gate, and his Praise is in all the Churches, so far as his Works are known.

That therefore which I have mainly to do, is, to assure thee that the following Treatise is the genuine Work of the same Learned and Pious Mr. *Alexander Nisbet*, who wrote the Exposition of the two Epistles of *Peter*; And (except the Arguments to the several Chapters) was perfected and made ready for the Press before his Death; And had long since come abroad into the World, if it had not been for some Assertions the Author hath upon Chap. 8. 4 Concerning Obedience to supreme Powers, which did not relish with the late Times, wherein Supremacy and Absolute Power were screwed up to the greatest height. And it may rationally be supposed that this Peice of his is not less Elaborat, consequently, will not be less Acceptable than the former, seing it is his Second Essay of this nature; and we usually say, *Secundæ Cognitiones meliores*. And as *Solomon* is with good ground judged to have Writt this Book in his Old Age, when he had taken a more serious View of his past Life; so it is certain the Reverend Author, wrote this his Exposition thereof in his Old Age, at least in the latter part of his Days, when he had taken a Review of his by-past Life; as he was indeed a very serious Observer both of his own Life, and of the Passages of God's Providence about him,

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yea and a recorder of both, though he did this in a Character at that time known to none but himself. And it is not improbable that his pains and labours upon this Subject through the Blessing of God, did contribute not a little to that weanedness from the World and all its vain Pleasures and Delights, to which in a great measure, the Author attained. And which did so notably fit and prepare him for his great Change; and made his passage from this Life to a better, sweet, easy and comfortable, that I remember I have several times heard that eminently worthy and Pious Minister, Mr. *Gabriel Cunningham*, speak of it both with delight and admiration.

I do therefore perswade my self, Reader, that if thou be a person who wouldst gladly have thy Heart weaned from the World, and be above the vain pleasures thereof, and have thy Conversation in Heaven, as a Stranger and Pilgrim in this Earth, the consideration of this will have that influence upon thee, as to make thee carefully peruse this piece, and look to the Lord for his Blessing therewith, that it may have the same effect with thee. I am sure the Subject treated of, is not only useful, but highly necessary, especially at such a time, when notwithstanding of all that is through the whole Scriptures, and particularly in the Book of *Ecclesiastes*, held forth of the *vanity and vexation of Spirit*, that is in all sublunary Contentments and delights: And notwithstanding of all the pains of the Lords Servants in their Expositions on the Scripture, and by Preaching, to Rivet this Truth upon the Hearts of Men: And notwithstanding of all

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the Experiences and Convictions Men have of this Truth, by the many disappointments they meet with from the Creatures: Yet so few have their Hearts and affections raised to favour the things that are above: But on the contrary, many, apace! very many, proclaim as it were upon the House tops, that *their portion is in this Life*, and that this World is their God: And as it was the design of the Spirit of God in the enditing of this Portion of Scripture, to take Men off from this, that they might not *spend their Money for that which is not Bread, and their Labour for that which satisfieth not, nor dig up to themselves broken Cisterns, that can hold no Water, nor weary themselves as in the Fire for very Vanity; but set their affections upon the things above, and upon God himself as their allsufficient Portion*: So I am perswaded, the same was also the design of the Author of this Exposition: And I am not without hope that through the Blessing of God, this may be as to some, the Fruits of his Labours therein.

But beside what thou hast heard, that may make this Treatise acceptable to thee, from the Author himself, I must farther acquaint thee that this piece of his was both seen and approven as very worthy of the press by some Ministers of great Eminency and Note. *viz. Mr. James Fergusson*, his next neighbour, and dear and intimate Brother, with whom he usually communicat all his Labours of this kind, and who also did the like with him: And also *Mr. Ralph Roger*, two so great names, that they are above all Encomiums from me: And a third who is also
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of great Judgement and discerning in such matters; but because yet alive, I both forbear any farther commendation of him, and also the mentioning of his name; who if he were not now at too great a distance, might have been fitter for this task than I. *There is only one thing that may seem to plead against the necessity and expediency of this piece's coming to light at this time; which is, there are so many Learned, and elaborat Expositions and Commentaries upon this place of Scripture: As, Broughtoun, Cartwright, Beza, Thomas Granger, Michael Jermin, Joseph Hall, William Thomson, William Pemble, Thomas Pirt, John Cotton, Edward Leigh, Arthur Jackson, Pools Annotations, and those whom he makes use of in his Synopsis, and many other foreign Divines of all persuasions, besides the former English Annotations, which if they had been as well done upon all the rest of the Scripture, as upon it, might in my humble Judgement, have saved the Learned Pool, and his Continuator, the pains of emitting their new Annotations.*

This part is so well done that it hath been thought worthy to be Printed a part by itself. And indeed worthy to be purchased by any who are not willing, or are not able to purchase all the rest: For though the
 * Author was afterward a Bishop, and I am not
 Friend to that office, as it hath been and still is
 by some enhanced: yet this doth not weaken the esteem
 I have for this, and his other both Pious and Learned
 Works, especially seeing I understand that he never was a
 Persecuter, but a person of great Moderation.

But to take off this Objection, let it be considered that the worthy and Reverend Author of this ensuing Exposition, as he had the benefite of most of all these expositions, so he had through the grace of God, the Judgement Sagacity, and Dexterity to choose out of them, what was most apposite, and most consistent with the Analogy of Faith; And even a Dwarf standing upon the head of a Gyant, will see farther than the Gyant himself: Consider likewise, that the Lord hath given great Diversities of Gifts to his Servants; and amongst others, the gift and talent of Some lyes especially in the Richness of their invention, Others in making more plain, and intelligible, the things which are invented by Others: And whether the Author had not his share in both I leave it to the Reader to Judge upon perusal, as likewise whether he had not considerable advantage beyond many, for opening Scripture, from his rare skill in the original Languages, especially in the Hebrew, wherein he greatly excelled. Again it would be considered that the Authors Exposition of this part of Scripture, as of the other he formerly expounded, is in a way and method peculiar to himself with the rest of his Countrey men, who went before him therein, which is, plainly and succinctly to open the words, and then to raise Practical Observations from them, and these for the most part, very comprehensive, having oftentimes both Explanations, Cautions, and Reasons, and sometimes uses couched under them. Lastly let it be considered that the Scriptures of God, are so great a depth, that they cannot be exhausted, and when many

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have drawn, there is still more for others to draw after them; And so Rich a Mine, that when many have digged, there are still Pearles, and these precious Pearles to be found after them.

Reader, If thou be one that hast a real Hunger after thy Souls Food, thou wilt not cast at it, because it comes not to thee in a Lordly Dish: but if otherwise: I shall make use of the words of a Learned Writer in the like case, and apply them to thee (*If thy Stomach be nice and squeezie, and nothing will relish with thee, but what is sparse and elegant; there is store of such Composures in the World, upon which thou mayest even surfeit thy curious fancy: in the mean time there will be found some who will bless God for what thou despisest, and make many a sweet Meal upon what thou loathest.*)

And now, Reader, I believe I have tempted thy patience long enough, forgive me for this once, and I dare almost promise, that I shall not in haste do it again in this sort. I have only one sure and request to make unto thee, and I have done, if thou doest peruse this piece, and hast perused the Authors other Labours, and Mr. Dickson, and Mr. Hutchesons Labours of the same kind, and remembrest that all these were Ministers of the Gospel in Irwin, thou wilt from thence easily perceive, that they in that place have had very burning and shining Lights among them: And indeed beside those, they have had many other eminently Learned and Pious Men, and great Preachers of the Gospel, whose Memory is precious and Honourable, viz. Mr. Scrimseour, Mr. Hugh McKail,

*Mr. hail, Mr. Thomas Garven, the last two both after-
ward Ministers of Edinburgh, Mr. Alexander Dunlop,
afterward Minister at Paisly, Mr. John Park, afterward
Minister at Stranraer, Mr. John Stirling before that
Minister at Edinburgh, and Mr. John Grant, and it is
like some others, whose names have not come to my
knowledge, beside many other Learned, grave and Pi-
ous Ministers, who in our suffering times, being put
from their own charges, came and resided in this place,
especially during the time of Mr. Hutcheson and Mr. Stir-
lings Ministry here: By all which it appears that the
people of this place have had a long and clear day of the
Gospel among them. If therefore thou be one that liv-
est near God, I beg thy Prayers in their behalf, that their
fruit may be answerable, least, if otherwise, because of
their Barrenness, the Kingdom of God should be taken from
them, and the things which belong to their peace hid from
their eyes, Pray likewise for a poor unworthy Instrument
and Labourer for a while, in the same part of Gods Vine-
yard, who now hath succeeded, and during his time must
endeavour to follow so many great Men and Patterns,
though alone! He doth it, *non passibus equis*: Pray for
him that though his Talent be not so great as theirs, yet
he may be Faithful to lay it out for his Masters use, and
that God may strengthen his hands, bless, prosper, and
give success to his Labours; As he also Prayeth that the
Lord may Bless the following Treatise for thy Souls good
and comfort, as being, at least desiring to be.*

A Servant of Christ, and thine for his sake,

Irvin Sept. 14. 1693:

Pa: Warner,

AN EXPOSITION ON ECCLESIASTES.

CHAP. I.

The ARGUMENT.

THE great scope of the Spirit of GOD in this Book, being to point out to miserable fallen Man, the right way to recover his lost Happiness of Favour and Fellowship with GOD, and to convince him of the Vanity of seeking it in earthly things. The Holy and Wise Solomon by divine Inspiration, in his Chapter I (after the inscription of the whole Book, ver. 1. Bearing a description of the Paragon from his Ecclesiastick Office, national Dignity, and civil Dignity, far transcending the mere reverence and attention to the subject) doth shew, 1. Negatively, what true Happiness is not to be found, to wit, not in worldly Things, or any endeavours about or success in them: And in order to this, he first layeth down the Reason to be made out, all is Vanity, No. 1. 2. And secondly, Proves it by many Arguments, taken 1. from the unprofitableness of a mans gains about those outward things, ver. 3. 2. From the frailty of Man himself, who (though these things would profit him yet) cannot stay long with them; which he sheweth ver. 4. and illustrates it by comparing them first to mist and then to other inconstant and fleeting things, as the breath, dew, Wind, and Water, ver. 5. 3. From the nearness to dust and labour that Man hath in the pursuit of outward things before he attains to them, ver. 2. 4. From the emptiness of Satisfaction in those things when enjoyed even so the outward joys of Eating and Drinking of the flesh, and the like, and sought Happiness in them, ver. 6. 5. And the Determination of GOD, that is shall reward better with them who foreward shall take the same reward, who shall find no new thing in these things.

these delights, verl: 9, 10: 6. From the transitory and vanishing condition, both of these things in themselves, and of their remembrance with Men, verl: 11. 7. From Solomon's own experience [after serious search] of the Disappointment, Vanity, and Vexation, of all things under Heaven, verl: 12, 13, 14. 8: From the impotency and insufficiency of all the Creatures, and all humane Endeavours about them, to restore Man to his lost Happiness, verl: 15. 9. From the short reach and uncomfortable issue of the most sedulous exercise of the wit of Man about Natural and Moral things, without the Light of the Word and Spirit of GOD, notwithstanding all the Advantages he may have for that Study, verl: 16, 17: And 10. From the sad increase of Grief and Sorrow, as the fruit of all the Pains and witty Contrivances of Men about these things, while they neglect the Study of Reconciliation and Fellowship with GOD, which is their true Happiness, verl: 18: From all which it is evidently proven that was proposed verl: 2. That all earthly Things are Vanity in order to the making of a Man truly Happy; and that Man is vain in seeking Happiness in them, neglecting the Study of Reconciliation and Fellowship with GOD, in His Son Christ Jesus.

Ecclesiastes Chap: 1: Vers: 1:

The Words of the Preacher, the Son of David, King in Jerusalem

THIS Verse contains the *Inscription* of the whole Book, wherein the Pen-man labours to gain Reverence, and Attention to the following Purpose, by holding forth several considerations of himself. As First, His Ecclesiastick Office, whence he is called the Preacher, or Ecclesiastes, a Stile (as it is here expressed in the Original) only given to Solomon, no where found in Scripture, but in this Book; and doth signify, 1. One that hath a Calling to assemble the Church, and declare the mind of GOD to Her: And so it agrees well to Solomon, as a Prophet. 2. One Reconciled, or Re-united to the Church, and thus also it agrees to him, who by his grievous defection from the Lord, had separate himself from that Blessed Society, 1 King. 11. 3. 9. Now being restored again he is Ecclesiastes, a penitent Soul preaching his Repentance to the Church, the Word is of such a Form, as necessarily requires something of this kind to be

be added to it for making it plain in our Language, and futable to the Original, we find the like added in the Translation *Pfal.* 16. 2. Secondly, He describes himself from his Parentage, or descent according to the Flesh, He is the Son of David, a Man in high esteem with GOD, *Mat.* 13. 12. and with his Church, 2 *Sam.* 23. 1. a Type of Jesus Christ, *Pfal.* 89. 20. and his Progenitor according to the flesh, *Mat.* 13. 23. Solomon doth design himself thus, not to make any ostentation of his Royal Birth, but rather to raise our minds to expect much good from him, as the answer of many Prayers put up for him, *Pfal.* 138. 1. The Fruit of a Holy Education, *Prov.* 31. 1. And many wholesome counsels given him by his Father, 1 *King.* 2. 2. And to call the Church to mind of the Messiah, the true Solomon, who was known to the Church of the Jews by this stile, the Son of David, *Mat.* 22. 42. compared with *Psal.* 89. 35, 36. and is now speaking to the same, in this Book by his Type. Thirdly, He describes himself from his civil place and Dignity, that he was a King, and so had many advantages, whereby he might abound in Knowledge, and a King in such a place as Jerusalem, then the imperial Seat of Judea and Israel, afterward divided into two Kingdoms, the prime publick Residence of GOD in His Ordinances, with the only visible Church He had in the World: And so he had many occasions of being acquainted with the Wayes of GOD, with His Church and People, All which calls for Attention to the ensuing Purpose of this Book, Hence Learn, Whatever a publick Messenger of GOD may have to commend Him, and gain acceptance to His Messages, yet a Calling from GOD to Preach Truth in His Name, ought to be his chief encouragement to undertake any part of his employment, and should also add more weight to his Message in the minds of People, than any consideration of him they can have, even though he were a King. For Solomon before any other stile mentions this, and often afterwards thus alone, as holding forth the chief consideration of Him, that should gain Reverence and Acceptance to his Message, and encourage himself in his Duty, *The Words of Solomon*

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Preacher. 2. As those who have been very eminent for Office, Grace, and the like Qualifications, may when the Lord is provoked to withdraw) fall into such gross Abominations, as might make them justly to be schuded from the Society of the Church. So when the Lord worketh Repentance upon them, they will effect their Reconciliation with the Church, a great benefit, and will be content to Preach their Sin, and sorrow for Sin, that GOD may be honoured, and others warned; in which case they ought to be welcome to the Church again, and his Lords Message sent by them, received with no less respect than ever. For Solomon, in testimony of his grief that he was separated from the Church, and of his joy that he was admitted again to that sweet Society, he calls himself here *Eusepiapher*, which according to the signification of the Word touched in the *Exposition*, is as much as to say, a penitent Soul reconciled to the Church, called to Preach this *penitential Sermon* to the same, and so was to be received not only as a Member thereof, but a publick Preacher. *The Words of the Preacher.* 3. Although descent from wicked or obscure Parents, ought to be no just ground of prejudice against their Godly Children, who are by Faith served Heirs to the Father of the Faithful Gal. 3. 7. Yet descent from Godly Parents is such an advantage to Godly Children as may be very comfortable to them, in so far as it cleareth their right to such Promises as are made to the seed of the Upright Ps. 37. 26. And as it ought to be a strong motive to them to imitate their Parents, and unto others also to accept the more heartily any message that such have from the Lord to them: For which causes, beside others mentioned in the *Exposition*, we may judge Solomon here to commend the purpose of this Book from this, that he was the Son of David. 4. The Lord hath seen fit to employ some of all ranks of Men to be the Preachers and Pen-men of his Holy Word, some obscure persons, as Herodotus, Amos, &c. Fishers, Amos, &c. and of other employments, Amos 1. 1. That the glory of his Power and Grace may be the more conspicuous, some Nobles, as Solomon, David, and others, that Men may

A Preface TO ECCLESIASTES.

may see his Truth worthy to take up the Spirits of the greatest and both sorts are chosen, that all ranks of Men may meet with something in the stile of his Word suitable for them: For here is a Book of Scripture written by *the Son of David King in Jerusalem.* 5. That Grantees on Earth should think is no disparagement to them, nor inconsistent with the managing of the weightiest civil Affairs to spend some of their time and pains in using all means competent for them in their place to propagate the knowledge of the Truth, and advance true Piety; this being the best policy they can use for establishing their just power, and making People docile to them, *Prov.* 26. 12. For though *Solomon* wrote this Book as an extraordinary Man; yet in his study to edifie the Church, and in his pains for acquiring much of that experimental knowledge communicate to the Church in it, he acted as an ordinary Man, and therein is a precedent to all, especially Christian Magistrates, painfully to improve their time and gifts by Writing, or other ways, for the spiritual advantage of the Church and People of GOD, *The words of the Preacher*—*King in Jerusalem.* 6. Although the Truth of GOD be worthy of all acceptation for its own excellency and usefulness, *Psa.* 119. 97, 98. even though it were delivered by Shepherds, *Luk.* 11. 17, 18. yet these whom the Lord employs as his Embassadors to carry his mind to the Church, may make use of any external privilege they have, to make way for the more ready acceptance of their Message among the People (who are hardly moved to receive the Truth upon more pure and spiritual considerations) providing the advantage of the Truth, and not their own vain-glory be their end in so doing: For though *Solomon's* Calling to be a Preacher was alone sufficient to gain acceptance to his Message; yet to add the more weight unto it, he mentions also his Royal Birth and Dignity; and this in a modest way, omitting many other Titles of Honour, which vain-glorious Men are inclin'd to him, delight to multiply to themselves. *The words of the Preacher, the Son of David, King in Jerusalem.*

OLD VERSION OF THE TWO VOLUMES OF THE ECCLESIASTES. 1616.

VERSE.

VERSE II. *Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher, Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.*

THE scope of the Spirit of GOD by this divine Preacher, being to point out to miserable fallen Man the way to recover his lost Happiness, he doth first proceed negatively to convince him wherein it cannot be found, and for this end he propounds to be proven that *All is Vanity*, whereby is meant, that all the Creatures, and all humane Endeavours about them, are insufficient for yielding any true contentment to Men; or as the word signifies *All is Nothing*, or empty of any vertue as to the forementioned effect; and so this Expression, *All is Vanity*, is not to be understood of any thing that GOD hath made, in respect of the Being of it; all things that way considered being very good, *Gen. 1. 2. 13.* nor of Mans right use and enjoyment of the Creatures, so as to be led by them to his Maker, and engaged to his fear and obedience; for so all things are holy and good to the User, *1 Tim. 4. 4.* Neither yet of a Mans lawful diligence and pains in his lawful Calling and Imployment, as if that were Vain, *1 Tim. 5. 8.* But it is to be understood first. Of all created delights, such as Riches, Honours, worldly Pleasures, particularly instanced afterward as they are abused and subjected to Vanity, *Rom. 8. 20.* by Man seeking his chief Good, and placing his Happiness in them, neglecting withal the stupy of Reconciliation with GOD, and of living in his Fear and Obedience, recommended to him as the only way to true happiness, *Ecc. 12. 23.* And Next, It is to be understood of all the pains a Man can take by vertue of any humane power or skill to make himself happy, or contented, whether in the contemplation; or enjoyment of created things, which is also instanced, and proven to be vain in the following purpose, *All things* of this nature he doth proclaim to be *Vain* in this sense, unable to afford to Man any thing but disappointment, and that in the highest degree; for by this form of speech *vanity of vanities*, the Hebrews use to express the super-

superlative degree, *Gen. 9. 25. Cant. 1. 1.* And to make this Truth take the deeper impression, he propounds it by way of exclamation, as it were wondering at, and pitying the madness of the Children of Men, who are so ravished with the apprehension of Happiness in that which is but as a *Vapour*, as the word translated *vain* doth also signify. And this same Truth he doth here repeat frequently, to shew not only the certainty of it; *Gen. 40. 31.* but also Mens unwillingness to consider it, *Jer. 22. 29* the difficulty of believing it, *Job. 5. 2, 4. and 6. 37.* and how deeply himself, now a Penitent, is affected with the Folly and *Vainness* of his former sinful courses, and how extremely he did detest them; *Gal. 1. 8. 9.* And because Men hear such Doctrine oftentimes, as from Men only, and so esteem it but vain words; therefore he mentions again his Calling to publish it to the World: and though Men will grant the truth of this assertion as to some things, yet deny it as to others; therefore he closes with this general, *All is Vanity*: Now this Language of the Old Testament is the same in substance with that of the New, *Philip. 3. 8.* which doth fully clear this *Doubtless I count all things loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.* Hence learn, 1. It is an excellent method of dealing with Sinners, First, to convince, & make them sensible of the unworthiness & insufficiency for Happiness of these things which they pursue for satisfaction and contentment, & so to make way for commending to them what is only worthy to have their heart, time and pains spent upon it, considering that all Men are either wholly mistaken in this matter, as to the taking up wherein their true Happiness consists, *Isa. 55. 2. Tit. 3. 3.* or apprehensive of the consistency of their Idols, and fellowship with GOD, *1 John 1. 6.* For this is the method the Spirit of GOD puts this excellent Preacher upon, before he point out wherein the chief Good consists, and how the enjoyment thereof is attained: First, to demonstrate this Truth here asserted, *Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* 2. It is necessary for a faithful Preacher (in the entry of his labour with the Lords People) to condescend upon, with himself

An Exposition of ECCLESIASTES.

himself, and to propose to them some certain scope to be aimed at: by him, to the clearing and use making wherof, his following purpose may be directed, that so himself may be kept from extravagancy in discoursing, and peoples minds kept free of confusion; both which are occasioned by variety of purposes having little or no evident dependance one upon another. For here *Solomon* in the entry doth condescend upon, and propose that which is one principal part of his scope in this Book, and as it were one Text which he is to explain, or one Doctrine which he is to prove and apply, *Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* 31. Even these earthly and sensible delights which are in themselves good, and in their right use lawful, and subservient to Man for attaining true Happiness, do prove altogether unprofitable, and unsatisfactory to him, if he seek after the enjoyment of them, as his chief Good, in regard they have no proportion, nor suitability to the Soul of Man, which is of a spiritual Nature, *Jer. 16. 19.* made capable of enjoying an infinite Good, *GOD* reconciled to it through *Christ*, as its Portion, *Psa. 73. 25, 26. 2 Pet. 3. 4.* and so can never be satisfied with these fading and transitory things; for all temporary delights, mainly because they are fading, and unable to satisfy the immortal Soul, are here pronounced to be *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* 4. So transported are all Men naturally with the apprehension of Happiness in things earthly, *Jer. 2. 24.* and therefore so unwilling to hear and admit of any thing to the contrary, *Zech. 7. 11.* that those who would convince them of the Vanity of these things, and of the folly of their way in seeking Happiness in them, had need to study a very ravishing strain of dealing with their Hearers, to be very instant and frequent in inculcating upon them the baseness and vanity of their Idols and sinful courses, and to lead up their minds to One higher than themselves, in whose name they speak: For *Solomon*, speaking especially to such as are pursuing Happiness in things earthly, useth here many Elegancies of Speech, not necessary to be particularly reckoned out, repeats often the Vanity of earthly things.

things, and minds his Hearers of his Calling to declare it unto the World, while he sayeth *vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* 5. A true Penitent, who after he hath tasted the bitterness of his sinful courses, is brought to taste the sweetness of fellowship with GOD, will be no less affected with admiring the emptiness and baseness of created delights, and their unworthiness to be chosen as a Mans portion, than he hath been formerly, with the apprehension of Happiness and Contentment to be had in them; and such an one will be a fit Instrument to point out to others in a lively way the Vanity of these things whereby himself hath been so far disappointed, and cannot but be very strongly desirous to have others perswaded thereof. For these words flow from the sense of penitent *Solomons* Heart, admiring his own madness in seeking Happiness in so vain things as he had done, during the time of his estrangement from GOD, weighted with grief for his so doing, and earnestly desirous to reclaim other perishing Sinners from such vain courses, as he had followed, and to allure them to come and Taste of that Sweetness in fellowship with GOD, which he now enjoyed, while he thus cries out *Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher, Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.*

VERSE III. *What Profit hath a Man of all his labour which he taketh under the Sun?*

THis penitent Preacher cometh now to prove his former Assertion, *that the Vanity of all earthly Delights in order to the satisfaction, or making happy of the Soul of Man.* His first Argument is taken from the unprofitableness or fruitlessness of mans pains about these things, and the more to rouse the Conscience of them that apprehend no advantage but in things of that nature, he includes the Argument in a Question, *What Profit hath a Man, &c.* which hath the force of a Negation (as is clear the like question hath in Scripture, 1 *Cor. 14. 6.*) im-

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porting as much as if it had been said, There is no true Profit at all, or, There is no real Advantage which may be truly called excellent, nor is there any abiding fruit of a Man's pains for attaining Happiness or Contentment in these things (for the word in the Original which is translated *Profit*, signifieth both that which is *Excellent*, and that which is *Permanent*.) Now this is not to be understood as if Men had no real success intable to their lawful pains about earthly things vouchsafed upon them, that were contrary to *Prov. 14. 23.* but the meaning is, That there is no Profit conducing to the spiritual and eternal Happiness of the Soul to be had by all that wicked labour, and toillome pains (both which the word in the Original here translated Labour, doth signifie: For it is translated *Perverseness*, *Numb. 23. 21.* *Trouble*, *Psal. 73. 5.* and *Affliction*, *Psal. 35. 18.*) which can be taken by any Child of *Adam*, as he is in his Natural estate, or in estrangement from *GOD*, as *Salomon* had been, who no doubt hath sad Reflections upon his former sinful course, while he thus speaks for the Reclaiming of others. And this fruitlessness of a Mans Labour be doth restrict only to things under the Sun, that is, of an earthly and temporary concernment, on which Man spends his time and pains, which should be employed about things above the Sun, or of a heavenly and eternal concernment, which are of a higher rise and nature, and so are expressed by things above. *Col. 3. 1.* And as this Question hath the force of a Denial, so hath it also of a strong Assertion of the contrary, as the like Question hath in Scripture, *Gen. 27. 26.* and so it hath this also in the meaning of it, that there is unspeakable Loss and Disadvantage to Men by all the pains they take about Things earthly, while they neglect to seek after Things that are above, and the force of it is fully cleared by that Question of *Christ*, *What shall it Profit a Man to gain the whole World and lose his Soul?* *Mark 8. 36.* Hence *Lumen 1.* However Men that seek their Portion in this Earth, may have abundance of outward success of their Labours, *Job 12. 6.* and even more than their Hearts can wish, *Psal.*

73. 7. Riches, Honours, and Pleasures, which they esteem the only real and substantial Advantage that Men can have by their pains, *Hof. 12. 8.* yet while they neglect the study of that excellent knowledge of GOD in *Christ*, and the way how they may win him, *Phil. 3. 8, 9, 10.* which is the only gain of a *Christian*, *Phil. 1. 21.* they are so far from reaping any true Profit, or Advantage which deserves to be called worthy or excellent (as the word here translated *Profit* signifies) that on the contrary their loss is unspeakable, it being no less than the loss of their Souls, and everlasting Blessedness, for there is a Negation of any true Profit, and an Affirmation of unspeakable Loss imported in this Question, as was cleared in the Exposition, *What Profit hath a Man of all his Labour?* 2. Nothing is to be esteemed the true Profit of a Mans Labour of Body and Spirit, but that only which will abide, and continue with him, and therefore his Profit cannot in reason be thought to consist in Earthly Pleasures which are momentary, *Job 26. 5.* nor in Riches which take Wings, *Prov. 23. 5.* nor in worldly Glory which descends not after him, *Psal. 49. 17.* but is only to be placed in fellowship with *Christ*, which may be in some measure continued with him along the course of his Pilgrimage here, *Can. 8. 5.* *Psal. 89. 13.* *Heb. 13. 9.* and shall never be interrupted hereafter, *Rev. 14. 4.* For, this expression *What Profit hath a Man of all his Labour?* may be translated, *What is there abiding or remaining to Man of all his Labour?* &c. 3. While Men remain in an unrenewed state, or being renewed, live in estrangement from GOD, they are so taken up with their present sensible satisfaction, concerning nothing else to afford them such Profit or Pleasure as they apprehend to find in their Idols, *Gen. 29. 32.* *Can. 5. 3.* that they never put their own Hearts seriously to consider how fruitless their pains are in order to their true Blessedness, nor how unspeakably great their Loss is by remaining in that condition, whereby they are holden fast in it, till the Lord powerfully change them, *Isa. 44. 20.* For, the Spirit's urging Mens Consciences with this Question, imports them utterly averse from

pondering it till he put them to it. *What Profit hath a Man of all his Labour wherein he laboureth?* 4. It is the serious consideration of the unprofitableness of Mens Labour about Things earthly, as to the making of them truly happie, and of the unspeakable Loss they sustain by their pursuing these things, neglecting in the mean time the study of Reconciliation and fellowship with God, which the Lord uleth to bleſs, for reclaiming Sinners from their evil wayes, and for continuing and increasing a penitent frame of Spirit in them that are reclaimed: For, as Solomon represents both these in this question that he may reclaim Sinners from following lying Vanities, so doubtless he doth thereby renew in his own heart the exercise of Repentance, for his own former folly. *What Profit hath a Man of all his Labour wherein he Laboureth.* 5. What ever be the kind of Labour that Men unrenewed, or estranged from GOD can exercise themselves in, whether it be about Civil or Religious Employments, the same is all alike unprofitable to them, as to the bringing about of any true Happineſs or Contentment to them, and is both their Sin and their Misery, though they change their Labour never so oft, they can never find any Profit in it, their *Plowing is Sin*, Prov. 21. 4. and so is *their Praying*, Prov. 28. 9. And therefore all will increase their misery: For this word whereby their pains of what sort soever are set forth signifies Perverſe or wicked Labour, wearisome, and spending Toil and Travel. *What Profit hath a Man of all his Labour which he taketh under the Sun?* 6. There is no question to be made of excellent Advantage, and abiding Fruit to be had of that Labour which GOD's special Grace enables Men to take about things that are above the Sun, such as the Favour of GOD, and everlasting Blessedness: For, the question is only, *What Profit hath a Man of all the Labour he takes under the Sun?*

Verse IV. *One Generation passeth away and another Generation cometh, but the Earth abideth for ever.*

Verse V. *The Sun also ariseth, and the Sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he riseth.*

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Verse VI. *The Wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north, it whirleth about continually, and the Wind returneth again according to his circuits.*

Verse VII. *All the Rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full: unto the place from whence the Rivers come thither they return again.*

THe second Argument to prove the Vanity of Things earthly, and to wean the Hearts of Men from seeking Happiness in them, is here taken from the frail, and fading condition of man, who cannot abide long to enjoy these things, though there were some Profit in them, which he denied in the former Verse, and therefore they must be vain in order to his chief Happiness. And this he *First* asserts, while he saith, *One Generation cometh, and another goeth*. By *one Generation* he means the whole company of Men and Women living together at one time, as the word signifies, *Psal. 12. 7.* By the *passing away of one Generation and the coming of another* is meant, that all the Men now living are in a continual motion, departing away from their earthly Enjoyments, and that there is another Company coming up in their place to possess the same, and then to leave them to others again as the former did, so that none of them can long enjoy these things. *Secondly*, He doth illustrate this frail, and transitory condition of Man, by comparing it with the more permanent condition of other Creatures, of which he giveth four Instances, with every one whereof Mans frailty is to be compared, that it may take the deeper impression. The *first* is of the *Earth*. *The Earth* (saith he) *abideth for ever*, which is not to be understood as if this World were eternal, as *Athenis* desire, *2 Pet. 3. 3. 4.* For the Scripture is clear to the contrary, *Mat 24. 35. 2 Pet. 3. 11.* But it is said to abide for ever because it shall remain fixed for a long time, as the Original word translated *for ever* doth often signifie in Scripture, *Deut. 15. 17. 1 Sam. 13. 12.* even so long as time lasts, that it may be an abiding Stage for Generations to go and come upon, which duration of the Earth

is a kind of Eternity in comparison of Mans short abode upon it, the consideration whereof may serve to dissuade Man from seeking his Happines in the Earth: For, however the Earth abideth very long; yet Mans abode upon the Earth is very short. *v. 4.* The *second Instance* to shew that this frailty of Man, is of the *Sun*, who keeps a constant, orderly, and swift motion toward the place of his rising and setting, and he is said *to haste toward* (or *pass after*, as the word signifies) the *Orient* or *place of his rising*, because however his motion be no less swift toward the *Occident*, or place of his setting; yet his rising is most desired, and remarked by Men, but as for Man when he is once gone down to Death, he shall rise no more to the enjoyment of his earthly Contentments, *Job 14. 7. 12.* and therefore these are not to be sought after as his chief Happines. *Verse 5.* The *third Instance* for the clearing the same purpose, is of the *Winds*, whose motions, although to us they are most uncertain, yet in all their changes they do constantly observe their *Courses* or *Rounds* which are appointed them by him who *bringeth them out of his Treasures*, *Psal. 135. 7.* Ordering all their motions at his pleasure, *Job 37. 12.* And in some places of the World, makes them to keep such an uniform course, as Men may know whence they will blow at such and such Seasons: But as for frail and uneconstant Man, he is like a Wind that passeth away and returneth not again to his place in the World, *Job 7. 7. 10. Ps. 78. 37.* *Verse 6.* The *fourth Instance* is of the *Waters* which keep their constant course, the Rivers running toward the Sea, and yet the Sea never full, because the Waters are either drawn up thence into Vapours, and Clouds, to distill down upon the Earth, to water it, and fill the Rivers again, or else conveyed throw secret passages of the Earth, and Rocks to the Fountains and Lakes whence Rivers do arise; but as for frail Man he is carried away as with a Flood, *Ps. 93. 3.* and never returns again to the enjoyment of his earthly Contentments. *V. 7.* Now that which is here spoken of the permanency of the Earth, and constancy of other Creatures in their motions, is to be understood

flood of them in their ordinary course. For the Lord hath given proof of his Sovereignty in changing their course, making the Earth to tremble. Job 9. 6. the Sun stand still in Joshua's time, Job 10. 12. and go back in Hezekiah's time. Jer. 38. 2. The River to run backward from the Sea. Ps. 124. 5. and the Winds to blow as it were out of all Quarters at once, Job 1. 18. And however many excellent and useful Observations concerning the Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and other Properties of God, may be drawn from all these Instances, considered in themselves, and by the help of other Scriptures where they are made use of, as from the firmness of the Earth established upon nothing. Job 26. 17. to admire the marvelous power of God, and be helped thereby to believe the most unlikely thing that he hath promised, Isa. 45. 18. &c. from the constant motion of that glorious Camp of Heaven the Sun, to be helped to believe the constant faithfulness of God in keeping the promises of his Covenant to his People. Jer. 31. 22. 36. and 23. 10. his Bounty. Ps. 84. 11. and his speedy helping his People in straits. Mal. 4. 2. And from his ordering the motions of the Winds and Waters, to be moved to believe how easie it is with him to restrain and punish his Enemies; Ps. 65. 7. Amos 9. 6. yet these things are not to be here considered as intended in these Instances, which are only brought in to illustrate Mans frail and fading Condition, as being much more vain, uncertain, and inconstant, than that of the rest of the Creatures, and we may be the more confirmed that this is the intent of the Lords Spirit, in setting down these Instances, by considering that the Scripture doth frequently illustrate Mans frailty by these and the like similitudes. Job 14. 2. 19. and 16. 22. Psal. 1. The whole company of Men and Women that are upon the face of the Earth, are in a continual motion toward Death and Eternity, whatever they be doing, their course that way is never interrupted: And therefore is every Man in particular should look upon himself as being shortly to bid fare well to all his earthly Contentments, never to meet with them again, that thereby his heart may be

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weaned from delighting in them as his Portion, that he may be moved to seek after that which will abide with him when he is gone out of this World, *Luk. 12. 23.* And in so doing may have true Comfort, considering that neither his Sufferings in this World can be long, *1 Cor. 4. 7.* nor his Combat with his spiritual Enemies, *Rom. 16. 26.* nor shall he be long holden from the possession of his Blessedness: *Rev. 3. 11.* So likeways should every one look upon another as passing away, whether they be his nearest Friends or Relations in whom he hath most comfort, that he may not idolize them, *1 Cor. 7. 31.* or his Enemies that he may neither envy their prosperity, *Pf. 37. 2.* nor by fear of them be hindered in his Duty, *Isa. 51. 12, 13.* seeing himself and they also shall so soon pass away. For to convince Men of the Vanity, and Insufficiency of all earthly Delights in order to their true Happiness, the Spirit of the Lord doth here by a word of the present time represent the whole company of Men that live together at any one time upon the Earth as in a continual motion, travelling away to another place, to make way for others who are to come up in their stead, *One Generation passeth away and another cometh. 2.* There will be a continual succession of one Generation to another while the Earth and Time doth last, that *Gen. 1. 1.* may always have a Bride, and a Seed to serve him in the World: the thoughts whereof, as they should move every Man so to serve his Generation, as he may profit the succeeding, *Pf. 149. 4.* so should they strongly divert him from pursuing the transitory Vanities of this Earth as his Portion and Happiness, that so he may not leave behind him the effects and memory of his Vanity, and Wickedness to be an occasion of Sin, or matter of Grief to the succeeding Generation: For as an Argument to persuade Men of the Vanity of earthly Delights, that so their hearts may be weaned from them, is this asserted that when *one Generation passeth away another cometh. 30.* So bewitched are Men naturally with their present earthly Enjoyments, so forgetful of their Mortality, and the time of their parting with them, and so dull in the apprehension

of such things when they are pointed out to them, that they have need of many Remembrancers thereof, and of much pains to be taken upon them, to stamp their hearts with serious Thoughts of the same; and so gracious is the Lord, that he vouchsafes all this upon them, as appears by his instructing them here (and else where in his Word) how to read profitable Lessons of this sort upon the Earth, the Sun, the Winds and Waters, which have more permanency and constancy, than vain Man who seeks his Happiness in a momentary enjoyment of Things here. *The Earth abides for ever, the Sun ariseth and goeth down, and the Winds whistle about continually, the Rivers run into the Sea, and thence return to the place whence they came,* all which are here reckoned out to teach Man his frailty, and to illustrat to him his inconstant and fading condition asserted in the first place, *One Generation passeth away and another cometh.* 4. The whole Creation keepeth that constant course of Obedience to their Maker wherein he set them at the first, and will continue so doing till he loose them from their work, so that Man cannot look any where among the Creatures, but he shall see them at their duty, except when he abuseth them, as it were contrary to their Inclination, violently forcing them to serve him in his sin. *Rom. 8. 21. 22.* This should convince him of his sinfulness, while he beholds all the Creatures so speedy and constant without wearying at their duty, and himself so sickle in what is good, so frequently out of his duty, and acting contrary to the Law given him, and the strength and Grace allowed upon him: For, here the four principal parts of the World are brought in constantly at their duty, to illustrat Mans Vanity who forgets his Frailty, and so hardneth himself in the pursuit of vain Things which he cannot long enjoy as his Portion. *One Generation passeth, &c. but the Earth abides for ever, The Sun also, &c.* 5. So spiritual a frame of heart should a Child of God intertain, that he should be still making some spiritual use of these visible things which do most commonly offer themselves unto his view, and particularly so mindful should he be of his Mortality, and the frailty of his earthly

earthly condition, that he should not only read the same upon these creatures which are more fading, and offer themselves to his view only at certain Seasons, *Pl. 103. 15. Jam. 1. 10. 11.* But also upon these that are more permanent than himself, and offer themselves continually to his consideration, for, so doth the Spirit of God here teach Man, by this Divine Preacher to make a Spiritual use of, and particularly to mind his Mortality and Frailty, by this, that the Dust he treads upon is more durable than he, the *Sea, Wind and Waters* are more constant in their course than he.

Verse VIII. *All Things are full of Labour, Man cannot utter it, the Eye is not satisfied with Seeing, nor the Ear filled with Hearing.*

THIS Verse contains two further *Arguments* to convince Men of the Insufficiency of all earthly Delights to make them truly Happy; and so to prove them vain who seek Happiness in them: *The one is*, that all these Earthly Things being sought after as a mans chief good, *are full of Labour*, to wit, to the man that labours about them, he finds nothing by them but Toil and Weariness, which spends him and makes him faint, as the word signifies; and this spending labour is so great, that neither he that takes it, nor any other can sufficiently express it. *The other Argument is*, that these things about which man doth thus labour, when they are enjoyed by him so far as can be, do yield him no true satisfaction at all, which might compensate his wearisome labour in seeking after them; and this unsatisfaction he doth instance in two of the outward Senses, whose Objects are most various and delectable of any other, and yet they remain still unsatisfied: Now these two are put for all the Senses, and the Senses are ordinarily in Scripture put for the Faculties of the Soul; especially the Desires and Delights thereof. *Psal. 25. 15. 1 Job. 16.* Which can never be satisfied with any earthly thing. And if we joyntly consider the Preachers two former Arguments,

guments, to wit, that there is no true profit in these earthly things, and that man hath but a short abode with them, together with the two here made use of, Namely, That it costs a man unspeakable *Toll* and *Weariness to Labour*, before he attain to these things, and when he hath attained them so far as is possible, they yield him no *True Satisfaction*; we cannot but assent to that which he asserted in the entry to be proven, that all earthly things are *Vanity* in order to the making of Man Happy; and Man is vain in seeking Happiness in them, neglecting the Study of reconciliation & Fellowship with God, and of living in his Fear and Obedience for intertaining that Fellowship. And the substance of both these Arguments contained in this Verse, is plainly held forth by the Spirit of God expostulating with his people by *Sach. 5. 3. & Deut. 1.* Men that seek their Happiness in any created things whatsoever, shall meet with nothing in them, or in their endeavours about them, but exceeding great *Toll*, and so much *Weariness to Body and Spirit*, as all the comfort they can reap by these things, shall not be able to compensate, the Lord so disposing, that this *spending Labour* of Man may be an Admonition to all of their Folly, in seeking Happiness in these things, a powerful Motive to some to change their way, and seek their Happiness where the Word discovers it to be, *Isa. 55. 2. Psal. 102. 1, 2. Job 17. 3. Eccles. 12. 13.* And to others who will not do so, a just Correction of their Perverseness, and an earnest of their endless Vexation: For here the Spirit of God shews expressly what the man that seeks after any created thing as his chief Good, shall find for his so doing, *All things are full of Labour*, &c. Such is the natural perverseness of every mans Heart, before the Lord make a change upon him, that though he cannot be moved to take the least pains for his Souls Happiness, *Prov. 6. 10.* (the advantage and sweetness whereof is unspeakable *1 Cor. 2. 9.*) But doth esteem the easiest and sweetest Duties of Religion intollerably painful, *Mal. 1. 13.* Yet will he spend and waste himself in pursuing perishing Trifles, by so much toilsome Labour, as neither himself nor any other can suf-

Verse IX. *The thing that hath been* is that which shall be, and *that which shall be done*, is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the Sun.

Verse X. *Is there any thing whereof it may be said: (see, this is new?)* it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

THese words contain the *fifth Argument* to prove that Happiness cannot be had in things Earthly, and therefore that mans endeavours to find it in them must be Vain, the force of it is, that as all who have formerly sought after contentment in the Creatures, neglecting the Study of Reconciliation and Fellowship with God have met with nothing but much Toil and Vexation without any true satisfaction, as hath been shewn in the former verse, so is it the constant Determination of God, that it shall fare the same way with all that shall try the same course, neither shall any now living, or that are to live afterward, find any new thing in these earthly delights. Both the Idols which men can pursue, (called here, *the thing that hath been*) and the Courses they can take for attaining to them (called, *that which is done*) being the same for Substance, with these which have been before. *ver. 9.* And the more to convince men hereof, He puts it to the Conscience of every one to condescend (if they can) upon an instance to the contrary, while he saith, *is there any thing whereof it can be said, See, this is New?* Importing it impossible to show any such thing: and because every man seeking his Happiness in this Earth, is strongly Apprehensive of better success in his way, than these have had who lived before him, the Preacher doth again assert the contrary in the close of *ver. 10.* So that his denying any thing to be new under the Sun, and affirming that whatever is now hath been already, is not to be understood of things Spiritual and Heavenly, such as are the new Works of God in the second Creation, about the Conversion of Sinners, which are all new. *2. Cor: 5. 17.* Nor of the Mercies of the Lord daily renewed to his own *Lam: 3. 23.* Which though they be the same for kind and substance with,

as some Happiness to themselves, for, of this they are here threatened to be deprived. *There is no Remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any Remembrance of things that are to come, with these that shall come after.* 4. This Oblivion of Men and their Actions, which the Lord threatens as a punishment of their forgetting things necessary for his Glory and their Souls Good, and of their imagining Happiness in so vain a thing, as other Mens remembering them and their Actions after they are gone, should wean their Hearts from Earthly Contentments as their portion, and make them Study by all means to be of the number of them whose Memory is Blessed. *Prov. 10. 7.* And who shall be with God and His Saints, in Everlasting Remembrance. *Pf. 112. 6.* For, As an Argument toward this Scope, is this here brought in. *There is no Remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any Remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after.* 5. Let Men weary themselves never so much in going from one thing to another seeking after an Earthly Happiness, the Lord hath determined to blast all their Enterprises, and to oppose himself to them in every course they can take for their satisfaction, beside the Study of Reconciliation with himself, and living in his Fear and Obedience; for after he hath disappointed them all along their Life, of desired satisfaction in their several Idols, as is expressed in the former Words, he declares here, that he resolves also to cut off that which they imagined to have after Death. *There is no Remembrance of former things, neither shall there be any Remembrance of things that are to come.* 6. If Man did Remember the former Courses that others have taken for attaining satisfaction in things Earthly together with the sad disappointments that God hath made them to meet with in their way, whereof they may be kept in Remembrance, by the Study of the Scriptures, and Observation of Providences, they might thereby be kept from looking upon any Earthly delight, they can propose to seek, as if it were new, and from imagining to fall upon any new course which may prove more successful for attaining to it, than

than hath been taken by others before, who have been all disappointed; for, as was touched in the Exposition, this verse may be taken for a Reason of that which is supposed in the former Argument, to wit, that Men apprehend a newness in their Idols, and that they may fall upon new and more effectual wayes of attaining to them than others have done before, this I say may be taken as a Reason of their so doing, even Mens forgetfulness of what is past, Importing that if they did remember Gods disappointing others following the same Idols, in the same way that themselves do, this Remembrance of former things might be a mean to divert them, from insisting in that way, but now they look upon their Idols as if they were new; for *there is no Remembrance of former things*, and others also will go on the same way, because *neither shall there be any Remembrance of things that are to come, with those that shall come after.*

Verse XII. *The Preacher was King over Israel in Jerusalem.*

XIII. *And I gave my Heart to seek and search out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under Heaven, this sore travel hath God given to the Sons of Man, to be exercised therewith.*

XIV. *I have seen all the works that are done under the Sun, and behold all is Vanity, and vexation of Spirit.*

HERE is the *Seventh Argument*, taken from the Preachers own Experience, the sum of it is, that after his most painful and Serious Study, to see the utmost that Mans wit could attain unto, for the bringing about of any Happiness or true contentment to him, while his affections are not set upon things which are above, he had found by Experience that all comes to nothing but disappointment and Vexation. And that this Argument from his Experience may be the more forceable, he doth first, hold out several considerations of himself and his Study, to add weight unto it. As, 1. That he was advanced both to Ecclesiastick and Civil Dignity, and that over the People who were the only Church
that

that God had in the World, and so was not only obliged to this Study, that he might profit the Church, he being called to be a *Preacher*, but singularly fitted with many Advantages for furthering himself in his Studies, he being a *King*, and that in *Jerusalem*. Verse 12. 2. That this Study of his was not by constraint, but that his Heart was applyed and strongly inclined to it, *He gave his Heart unto it*. 3. That his inclination was followed with Variety of pains, one degree of diligence being added to another in the use of all means for attaining to cleareness in this great question wherein true Happiness doth consist, *he gave his Heart to seek and search*. 4. That this his Study was guided and ordered by that habitual Wisdom which God had given to him in an extraordinary measure, above all other Men. 1 *Kings* 4. 29. 5. That in this accurate enquiry of his, none of the Creatures, or Works of God about them, that might in his apprehension contribute any thing for making Man Happy, had escaped his consideration. And next he doth hold forth two Experimental Observations of his, as the result of this his most painful and accurate Study. 1. That this painful and Laborious way of acquiring any measure of right and sound knowledge, is imposed by the Lord upon Man to be a humbling Exercise to him, as the Word translated *Sore travel* signifies, the more to convince him of his natural Misery. Verse 13. 2. That upon a serious Survey of all these Works of God which he had been Studying, he had found that Man, Living out of Fellowship with God, can find nothing by them but disappointment, or emptiness of satisfaction which is *Vanity*, and a gnawing of his Conscience, or feeding of his Soul upon the Winde which is the *Vexation* of Spirit here spoken of. Verse 14. As for the time when *Solomon* hath been Exercised in in this painful Study here spoken of, it may be either referred to the time of his defection, and estrangement from God, when he was employing his wit (which even then remained with him *Ecclesi* 2. 9.) to the utmost for finding out an Happiness, beside fellowship with God, and so it makes to his proposed scope, seeing he
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is now a penitent sadly reflecting, and at direction of the Spirit of God, passing sentence upon his former folyes: Or this painful Study of his, may be referred to the time of his nearness to God, whether before his defection, or after his recovery from it, and so the purpose agrees no less to the same Scope, considering that his end in that Study, was to see what Mans wit could attain unto, in or about the Creatures, for making him truly Happy; that so he might the more effectually convince his own, and the Hearts of others, of *Vanity* in seeking Happiness that way. Beside what was observed from *Solomons* description of himself *verse. 1.* We may hence *Learn. 1.* The eminency of a Mans place and Employment whether Ecclesiastick or Civil, as also the dignity and priviledges of the People over whom he hath Charge; should be so far from making him slack and negligent in pains for bettering of his Gifts, as if his measure of these were sufficient already, seeing he is so employed; that on the contrary, the consideration thereof should stir him up to the greater pains and diligence, that he may Grow in Abilities, for the more faithful and successfull discharge of his Employment, for, the consideration of *Solomons* Office in the Church and State of *Israel* may be looked upon as here mentioned by him, as a special motive to that exceeding great Diligence afterward described, *I the Preacher was King over Israel in Jerusalem. 2.* As these who have a calling to point out the way of Life and Blessedness to others, and to dissuade them from following Lying Vanities, should Labour for the Experimental knowledge, and feeling of the Power of the truths they deliver themselves, that with the greater affection and confidence, they may speak them to others; so when the Lord sends Preachers who may in Charity be Judged to speak from their own experience, People may take advantage of the consideration of the Messenger, to move their own Hearts to receive the truth, with a special measure of attention and reverence; for, here *Solomon* draws an Argument to gain weight to the truth from his own Experience who Preached it. *I the Preacher*

gave my Heart to seek and search out by Wisdom. &c. 3. Although these extraordinary, and Infallibly assisted Men who Wrote the Scripture, had much of the minde of God revealed to them immediatly, and without their pains and Study for acquiring the knowledge thereof. 2 *Pet.* 1. 21. yet were they not excoemed from ordinary pains, but rather called to more than ordinary Diligence, for further clearing to themselves, and confirming of their own hearts in the Faith and Experimental knowledge of these truths, so immediatly revealed, and for acquiring the knowledge of other truths, see. 1 *Pet.* 1. 10. Which both warrants and obliges, ordinary Ministers, not to spare their pains, for profiting in knowledge, and edifying the Church of God; for even this extraordinary man, *Preacher and King in Jerusalem, gave away his heart, to seek and to search by wisdom.* 4. The Lords People should be so far from disapproving the pains, and study of Ministers, or disliking the message which by much labour and premeditation, is fitted for them, as *Enthusiasts* do, such pains being commanded, 1 *Tim.* 4. 13. 16. and having the promise of a Blessing, *Prov.* 10. 4. that by the contrary these *Lessons* which are the fruit and result of much serious diligence in the Preacher, should be received with the more attention and acceptation by the Hearers: For, so doth *Solomon* here commend the Purpose in hand, and labour to gain Attention and Respect to it by this, that it had cost him so much pains and study in the acquiring of it. *I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom,* &c. 5. They that would grow in that knowledge which may be profitable for their own Souls must give their Hearts away to the study of it, by diverting their minds frequently from other Studies, and labouring to get their Hearts in love with that knowledge they aim at, as conducing to their Happiness, so will the whole Man concur in the study to which the Heart is applied, Pains will be sweetned, and Success will be certain, *Prov.* 2. 2. &c. for this course did *Solomon* take, and *I gave my heart* (saith he) *to seek* &c. 6. For attaining to that knowledge which may be profitable for the Saving of a Mans Soul, there must

must be variety of means used, such as bending of the Wit in searching of the Scriptures and meditating upon them, Prayer to God, and use making of all the helps we can have from others for encrease of our knowledge, adding one degree of diligence to another, even when after many Essayes there remains unsatisfaction with the measure attained, and the whole course of a Mans study in the use of these means must be so ordered, as his imploying of divine Help, and consulting of the Scriptures, may ordinarily go before the use of other means: For, the former of these two words here used to express Solomon's pains in *Seeking*, signifies a Mans own *secret Diligence*, which is especially *Prayer* and *Meditation*, the other signifies to ask the *help of others*, and likewise an orderly disposing of his pains in his Study. *I gave my heart to seek, and to search out*, &c. 7. As the Lord doth not bestow at once, all that measure of true and sound knowledge, which he intends to give to his Children, but lets it out by little and little, so one degree or measure of the same is the best guide to direct a Man in seeking after more of it, in so much as none can move to any good purpose in the study thereof, till they be first prevented with the free gift of some measure of that knowledge, it being that only which makes them capable of further, *1 Cor. 2. 14.* and sets them upon the fittest means of attaining thereto, *Eccles. 10. 10.* For, here it is clear, that Solomon had one degree of his Wisdom before another, and that the Former was his guide in seeking after the Latter. *I gave my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom.* 8. The greater measure of knowledge any attain unto, they will be the more desirous of more, the more accurate, and serious will their search be, and the greater their pains after a farther measure thereof: For, Solomon did not satisfy himself with that very measure which God gave him *1 King. 4. 29.* *But gave his heart to seek and search out by wisdom.* 9. There is nothing which God hath made, or doth, neither any thing which he ordereth, or permitteth to be done, but it deserveth Mans serious thoughts; as that from whence he may learn something for his profit: the

study of the Creatures will not only instruct him what is for the preserving, or recovering of his natural health, but also proclaim to him the glorious Properties of his Maker, *Pf. 19. 1. Rom. 1. 20.* The study of humane Affairs may teach him what is for the advantage of his worldly Estate, yea even the greatest miscarriages in the World may afford him either matter of caution to beware of the like, *1 Cor. 10. 6.* or of Praise that Men are restrained from miscarrying further, *Pf. 76. 10.* or of Comfort that God is bringing good of it, *Isai. 10. 7, 12.* For, Solomon did give his heart *to seek and search out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under the Sun.* 10. That the Children of the Lord may be the better content with their Portion, the more taken up with their Happiness in fellowship with him, and may be the more able to convince others of their folly and madness in seeking Happiness elsewhere, they may lay out their wit sometimes in considering what Happiness, the Creatures and humane Endeavours about them can yeild, still putting the same in the Ballance with what is to be had in Communion with the Lord, that so comparing *Christ* the true Apple-tree, with the Trees of the Wood, *His Fruit may be the sweeter to their taste,* and comparing the excellent knowledge of him, with what may be known and enjoyed of other things, these other things may become *Dross* and *Dung* in their esteem: For, we may safely consider Solomon here expressing himself to have laid out his Wit and Pains to see what Happiness is to be had in the Creatures, that so he might the more heartily cleave unto that *better Part* which he had *chosen*, and the more effectually convince all others of their folly in *troubling themselves about many other things.* *I gave my heart to seek and to search out concerning all things under the Sun,* &c. And behold *All is Vanuy*, to wit, in comparison of that solid Happiness which is in fellowship with the Lord. 11. Fallen Man cannot recover the least degree of his lost Perfection, without exceeding great toil and labour, and thus the Lord hath imposed upon him to make him the more sensible of the greatness of that Ruine that is come upon him, especially his

his understanding by the Fall *Eph. 4. 18.* to correct him for his folly, in employing his wit about things needless or sinful, *Luk. 10. 41.* and to make him long for that state wherein the study of things truly Excellent shall be his delight and satisfaction. *Pf. 17. 15.* For, now the Study of Knowledge is a *fore travel which God hath given to, or imposed upon the Sons of Men.* 12. Whensoever Man finds pain and travel in seeking after the knowledge of these things which he is called to study, he should mind what is Gods great End in so disposing, even to exercise him by putting him to humble wrestling with himself in Fasting and Prayer, for so the word sometimes signifies, *Esl. 8. 21. Dan. 10 12.* As the best way for him to be rid of Anxiety, while his Study is painful, and his Success seems small, and so to work his Heart to submission as the same word is rendred *Gen. 16 9* and so likewises to fit him for Gods answering of his pains, which is also in the signification of the word *Exod. 15. 21.* with a further degree of light, as the fruit and blessing of his pains, and stir him up to answer the Lord with thankfulness for any measure of assistance he hath: For, saith he, *this fore travel hath God given to the Sons of Men to be exercised, or to be humbled thereby or answered therein.* 13. However Man looking only upon a part of the works that are done under the Sun, (as for example, his own prosperous times, and imaginary delights, and not upon the miseries incident to him, and the Lords frequent crossing and disappointing of him in his designs) he may have golden Dreams of some piece of Happiness in his earthly Delights, and so forget his shedding with them, as he is ready to do, *Deut. 32. 29.* yet upon a full and serious Survey, of the whole together, so far as they may be seen, he may be brought to see *All Vanity*, and himself the greatest Vanity of all others, in that he mistakes the right way to his true Happiness: For when *S. Iohn* had seen all things under the Sun, he concluded, *All is Vanity.* 14. If Men had only disappointment of their hopes to look for, while they neglect the New and Living Way to Felicity, and seek their Happiness in vain and sin-

ful Courses, their Misery were the less; but beside this, they shall find the Issue of their course, to be an eating up and gnawing away of their Spirit, and that they have been feeding upon the wind, while delighting in Things earthly as their best portion. For so much is clearly held forth, in the signification of the Original words, *All is Vanity and Vexation*, or gnawing away of the Spirit, or feeding upon the wind.

Verse XV. *That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.*

THESE words contain the eighth Argument to prove that Happiness cannot be had in Things earthly, and particularly that Mens natural Wit stretched to the outmost in the study of all things under the Sun for attaining thereto, can bring him nothing but Disappointment and Vexation. The Argument is taken from the impotency and insufficiency of all the Creatures, and of all humane endeavours about them, to restore Man to that primitive Integrity of his Nature and Actions, which he enjoyed before his fall, and to restore to him these Perfections which he lost by it, (while he saith, *That which is crooked cannot be made straight, &c.*) And this the Preacher sets forth in two expressions, the first is *that which is crooked cannot be made straight*, the meaning of which is that that original perverseness, and contrariety to the mind and will of God which is in Mans nature, and appeareth in all his Actions, cannot by all the vertue and force that is in the Creatures, or the wit of Man, unrenewed, employed about them, be rectified or ordered, (as the Word *made straight* signifies) according to the right Rule, the will of the Creator. The second is, *that which is wanting cannot be Numbered*, the meaning of it is, that these spiritual defects, or privations (as the Word *wanting* signifies) which are come upon Man by his fall, cannot be so much as known to Man by his natural wit, or Numbered out to God who only can supply them, much less can they be supplied by Man him-

himself, untill he go out of himself to God in Christ, who makes crooked things straight *Isa. 40. 4.* and supplies all that is wanting to his People *Phil. 4. 19.* And therefore Man cannot expect Happiness in things Earthly, by all his Endeavours about them. Hence Learn. 1. Before Men get grace to choise God in Christ for their portions, and so be made new Creatures, there is nothing but Crookedness; and contrariety in their nature and Actions to what is truly good and right in the sight of God; their understanding is crooked, so as it cannot discern things spiritual. *1 Cor. 2. 14.* And hath upon it strong impressions contrary to the truth *Gen. 6. 5.* their will is crooked in regard of its averiness both from Passive and Active Obedience to their maker *Jer. 35. 18 & 18. 11. 12.* And that the full Bensill of it is toward that which is contrary to God *Eccle. 8. 11.* *Jer. 17. 9.* Their affections are crooked in so far as they Loath and weary of what God approves and commands *Mal. 1. 13.* They love and delight in what he abhors *Isa. 66. 4.* Whence it is that every step of their walk is a turning aside to their crooked ways *Pf. 125. 5.* Yea so wholly crooked and perverse is every natural Man, that the more straight he be in regard of External Righteousness, the more crooked he is in Gods sight in regard of his Pride, in not submitting to the Righteousness of Christ *Rom. 1 & 3.* for it is mainly of that original perverseness of Mans Nature, which makes all his Actions crooked and contrary to the Rule, wherof the wise Man speaks here, supposing it to be in all Men naturally, while he saith, *that which is crooked cannot be made straight.* 2. There are not a few things wanting to fallen Man considered in his Natural Estate, he wants Life. *Eph. 2. 1.* he wants Health *Is. 5. 6.* he wants Food *Luk. 15. 17.* he wants Rayment *Rev. 3. 17.* he wants the Sight and feeling of his wants *Ibid.* he wants desire to have them supplied *John 5. 40.* Yea, he wants the Art of numbring out his wants to him that can supply them: For, this is the other branch of his woful case, *That which is wanting cannot be numbred.* 3. The rectifying of this crookedness of mans Nature and Actions.

ons, and the supplying of his innumerable spiritual wants, is a Work that surpasseth the Power of all the Creatures, and consequently requireth a creating, infinit Power for the doing of it *Eph. 2, 10.* Only the infinit vertue of Christs Death can Crookly the old Man, and make the sinner a new Creature *Rom. 6, 4.* which is to make straight that which is crooked, only he whose understanding is infinit, who numbers the stars *Psal. 147, 4.* and hath in him all fulness, *Col. 1, 19.* knows the number of our wants, and can supply them all, for, it is in reference to the vertue of all the Creatures, improven to the utmost by the wit and Power of Man, that Solomon thus speaks *that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered* 4. As Mans Original perverseness, and his innumerable spiritual necessities, is an ancient Doctrine, which hath been in some measure manifested of old to the Church of the Jews, to the knowledge, and sensible uptaking of the same, is absolutely necessary for fallen Man, in order to his recovering of his lost Happines, as that without which he can never prize nor make use of the remedy of his woful condition, for, Solomon here doth clearly Branch out Mans natural sinfulness, while he saith *that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.* And by his so doing, supposeth a necessity that every Man must know and be sensible hereof, before he can take the course for remedying of it, which he points out afterward. 5. Every Man that desires to be truly Happy, should labour to be so sensible of the Perverseness and Crookedness of his Nature and Actions, of the multitude of his spiritual Wants, and the difficulty of rectifying the one, or supplying the other, and so desirous to be set upon the way of attaining to the same, that every thing which may not be made some way subservient to these ends, the rectifying of the Crookedness of his Nature and Actions, and the supplying of his spiritual Necessities, the same should be looked upon by him as not only contributing nothing to his true Happiness and Contentment, but also as full of vexation, and encreasing his

his Misery, seeing thereby his greatest evil is not removed, nor his greatest defects supplied; and consequently he should look upon every thing that may serve for attaining to these ends though his corrupt Nature were never so unwilling to endure the same, such as the discoveries of Sin, and threatnings of Wrath that are in the Law; *Rom. 3. 20* and *4. 15.* that new and living Way of making use of the Blood and Righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel, *Heb. 10. 20:* to which no Man inclines to submit. *Rom. 10. 3.* yea Crosses and Afflictions themselves, *Heb. 12. 10.* as so many desirable means of advancing him toward his true Happiness: For this Verse may be safely looked on, as a reason of that sentence pass in the former, upon all earthly Delights and humane Endeavours for contentment in them, to-wit; That by them all, *that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered*, the force of which reasoning is this, That which cannot serve for making straight Mans corrupt Nature, nor for numbring out, far less supplying his spiritual Defects, cannot serve for making him Happy; but none of these things wherein Man naturally places his Happiness, nor all the essays of his wit and power for attaining it in them, can do any thing in this Work, and therefore they can do nothing toward the making of him truly Happy. 6. However unrenewed Men do strongly imagine, their crooked Nature and Actions to be straight, and conform to the Will of God, that they can love God with all their Heart, and obey him acceptably, *Mar. 19. 20* and so do persuade themselves, that they have no spiritual Wants to mourn for; *Rev. 3. 19.* but only matter of Praise, because of the multitude of their spiritual Receipts *Luk. 18. 11.* Yet the more renewed a Child of God be, and the greater his spiritual Gifts are, the more sensible he is, of the Crookedness of his Nature and Actions *Rom. 7.* and of the innumerable multitude of his spiritual Wants and defects *Pf. 19. 11.* For this verse may be looked upon as the very sad Repent of Solomon, a Man very far advanced in Renovation, and endued with many eminent perfections, concerning the per-

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vertness of his own, and others Nature and Actions, the multitude of his and their spiritual Wants, and the weaknes of humane rPower to rectify the one, and the inability of humane Wit, to reckon out far less to supply the other, *that which is Crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbred.*

Verse 16. *I Commanded with mine own heart, saying. Lo I am come to great Estate; and have gotten more Wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: Yea, my heart had great Experience of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

Verse 17. *And I gave my heart to know Wisdom, and to know Madnes and Folly, I perceived that this also is Vexation of Spirit.*

THe preacher giveth here a *second Instance* of the weaknes and Insufficiency of Mans Wit, as it is Exercised especially about things Morall, or the practical affairs of Men, to direct him how he may recover his lost happines, the sum whereof is that himself after much pains taken to see how far a Mans wit, without the special Illumination, and conduct of the Lords Spirit, can possibly lead him right, and how far it ordinarily leads him wrong in reference to the matter of his true Happines, he had found the Issue to be nothing else but Vexation and sorrow, instead of true contentment. And this may be taken for the *Ninth Argument* to prove his Scope. Now that this Instance from his own Experience, may have the more weight, he doth first show how he did acquire it, not by a slight and careless inquiry, but by his most Serious *communing* or deliberating with his own Soul. Secondly he shewes what Advantages or Furtherances he had, to fit him for profiting in his Study, and did reflect upon, for his encouragement therein, to wit, *1. Much Worldly Greatness* such as Riches, Honour and the like, for however much abuse these things, yet

It appears that he made them his encouragement in his Study. 2. Rare inward qualifications, such as *Wisdom*, which being considered comparatively, made him to excell all that had been before him; or (as it is in the Original) *before his Face in Jerusalem*: And experience of *Wisdom*, and knowledge, which is acquired by observation of particulars and bringing of knowledge to practise. Thirdly he specifyeth the Object of this Serious Study of his, to which he did apply his heart being incited by these Advantages. And that was. 1. To *know Wisdom*, whereby cannot be meant his Study of saving knowledge, as a renewed Man, for that Study could not be censured as he doth this in the following words, that it proved *Vexation* and increased his grief; seeing himself had declared *Prov. 2, 10.* and *3. 17.* that that Study brings much *Pleasure and Peace* to the Soul, but by this *Wisdom* which he Studied to know, is meant, the wisest of these courses, that the wit of a Man unrenewed, and destitute of the speciall guidance of Gods Spirit, can sett him upon for attaining Happines, especially the Exercise of his wit in the Study of Moral vertues, such as Equity, Charity, Meekness, Temperance and the like, although even this *Wisdom* as he Studied it, was subservient to his progress in saving knowledge. 2. His Study was to *know Madness*, and *Folly*, whereby he doth not mean that he studied to know the case of these, who are deprived of the Exercise of natural Reason, seeing such are often very free of *Vexation*, nor doth he speak here of his Study, of the Wickedness and perverseness of his own Heart, in order to the mortifying thereof, because that Study also is Blest with much Peace, and quietness of Spirit. But by this *Madness* which he Studied to know, is meant, these violent sinful courses (such as oppression, unjust conquest and the like) which Men take for attaining to Worldly Riches, and Honours, and wherein wicked Men use to Glory, as if they were renowned by them, as the Word signifies, and by *Folly* these sensual and earthly pleasures, whereunto Carnal Men give up themselves: He studied the outmost in both these courses, which

might seem to promise, or bring about any Happiness to Man, and this he did that he might the more effectually convince all, that true Happiness was not to be found in these ways. And Fourthly. He passeth the same Sentence and censure upon these courses which he did upon the former, *viz.* that the outmost that any Man neglecting the Study of Reconciliation with God in Christ and of Living in his Fear and Obedience can attain unto, whether in the Exercise of Moral virtues, or by giving himself up to the satisfaction of his Fleishly Lusts, shall be so far from bringing him true Happiness and contentment of Spirit, that on the contrary, it shall Eat up his Spirit and (as the original word signifies) consume it with *Vexation* at Last. From this purpose *Learn*.
 1. They that would reclaim Sinners from pursuing their Happiness in things Earthly, must not think it sufficient to enlarge themselves in General Doctrine proving that all Earthly things are Vain, and unable to bring about Mans Happiness, but must give particular instances of them, especially of these things wherein the greatest show of Happiness is, and wherein Men do most diligently pursue it, and must Labour to convince them of the Madness and Folly of their way in pursuing of it in these, seeing that Doctrine which Men will be pleased with in the General, they will not willingly apply to themselves in particular
2 Sam. 12. 5. For after that *Solomon* hath by many Arguments in the former words proven in General the *Vanity* and insufficiency of all the Creatures, and Humane endeavours about them, to lead Man to his true Happiness, he doth here, and in the three verses immediatly preceeding, give particular instances of these courses which have taken up the best of natural Men, wherein they do most strongly apprehend their Happiness to be, and do most eagerly pursue it, to wit, the Study of the Workes of Creation and Providence, of which the former instance is given, and of things moral and the practical affairs of Men, whereof this is mainly to be understood *I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo &c.*
 2. They that would make progress in the Study of that knowledge

ledge which may be profitable for themselves and others in order to the attaining of true Blessedness, as they must be much in consulting of the Word *Pf: 119. 24.* And of the Spirit, for light *Jobu. 16. 13.* And of others also who can give them Information in that way *Jer. 50. 5.* So must they not neglect to Commune with their own Hearts, by putting them to ponder what the Word holds forth for their direction in that way *Luk. 2. 19.* To bring to remembrance what they have formerly Learned of it *Rev. 3. 3.* To consider the wonted Goodness of God to them which may engage them to walk in his way *Pf: 77. 6. &c.* To find out Grounds of comfort against their discouragements. *Pf: 4. 4.* And frequently to consider the hazard of mistaking the way, or sitting up in it *Heb. 4. 1.* For, *Salomon* while he was upon such a Study, as doubtless he made use of other Means, so he was often *speaking with his Heart*, as the words are in the Original, which are here translated *I Communed with my own Heart*, and the subject of his Communing with his Heart, was the same with that spoken of in the Scriptures cited, as will appear by comparing them with the present purpose *I Communed with my Heart, saying, Lo I am come to great Estate. &c. 3.* As there are some of the Lords dearly Beloved People, upon whom a very small Portion of the things of this present Life is allowed, that they may esteem the more of better things, and may be taught to trust God with their daily Provision *Luk. 16. 20.* So it pleaseth him to multiply and make exceeding great as the Original Word here signifies, the outward Estate of others dear to him, that all may know what he can do to his own, and would do to all of them if it were for their true good *Pf: 84. 11.* For, here *Solomon* acknowledgeth he was come to a great Estate, 4. However Mens proud Reflections upon, and vain Boastings of, their receipts and gifts, attributing all to their own Wit, be a detestable Sin, and often a Fore-runner of their being deprived in Wrath of these things *Dan. 4. 30.* Yet it is both Lawful and necessary for the Children and Servants of the Lord, to reflect upon and

Sometimes to reckon out to others, what His Grace hath bestowed upon them, when their so doing serves to encrease an humble and thankful frame of spirit. *1 Sam. 7, 18. &c.* And to commend any Message which the Lord hath to deliver, by them to others. *1 Cor. 15, 10.* For here *Solomon* reflecting upon his outward greatness, and his inward qualifications, doth it in modesty, not reckoning out all that he might, he doth it to show what ingadged him to his study specified in the following verse, and he doth it to gain the more weight to this usefull Experience, which here he holds forth to others, *Lo I am come to great Estate and have gotten more Wisdom &c. 5.* No Worlly Estate how great soever should satisfie the owner, unless he have therewith the Addition of Heavenly Wisdome, which Teaches him how to improve it for his Spiritual and Eternal Advantage, and without which he cannot but abuse it and turn it into a snare to his Soul. Therefore while *Solomon* Relates that he was come to a great Estate he adds further, and have gotten, or as the Word is in the Hebrew *I have added more Wisdom &c. 6.* As it is necessary for the Children of the Lord to compare themselves with others in Sin and Wickedness, that they may see how matchless they are for that, and so their Hearts may be humbled and free Grace commended. *1 Tim. 1, 15, 16, 17.* So it is sometimes no less necessary for them to compare themselves with, and preferre themselves to others in respect of the Gifts and Graces of God bestowed upon them, especially when they do it not to gain esteem to themselves, but acceptance to the truths of God which they are called to deliver to others. for, for this end mainly doth *Solomon* here compare himself with, and preferre himself to all that were before him in *Jerusalem*; and his Modesty appears in this that the Lord having said to him, that there had been none before him like him for Wisdome, neither should any after him be like him. *1 Kings 3, 12.* He saith only *I have gotten more wisdom than all that have been before me,* and this only to commend the truth of God which he here delivereth to the Church. 7. The Lords People should

should not satisfy themselves with the simple notional knowledge of the truth, unless they have also the experimental Knowledge thereof, which consists in our discerning evidently the things we know in the causes thereof, and by their effects upon our selves or others, as also when we feel our Hearts suitably affected, and our practise suitably ordered to what we know for this rising of the speech (in the latter part of verse 6.) *Yea my heart had great experience of Wisdom and knowledge*, imports the experience of Wisdome a greater Blessing than Wisdom it self, and the signification of the words in the original leads to the description given of experimental knowledge. 8 These to whom the Lord gives this Heavenly and experimental Wisdome, he makes them give their Hearts away to the Study of every kinde of knowledge that may contribute to the encrease of it, and that upon the clear apprehension of the worth and Excellency of it *Philos. 1. 9.* And the great Usefulness thereof to them, *Job 28. 6.* That so the Heart being applyed to the Study, the whole Man may be subservient to it, and all pains taken in it may be the sweeter: For, so was it with Solomon, *I gave my Heart to know Wisdom. 9.* The more outward Advantages and Accomodations men have for acquiring Knowledge, and the greater Inward qualifications fitting them for the same, the Lord hath bestowed upon them, the more should their heart be set upon enriching themselves therewith, otherwise the Lord will Challenge them sadly for abusing his Gifts, contrary to the end for which he gave them, *Prov. 17. 16.* For Solomon speaks of his giving his Heart to the study of more Wisdom, as that whereunto his *great Estate* and former *Wisdom* and Experience did ingage him, while he saith, *I communed with my Heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great Estate, and have gotten more Wisdom— And I gave my heart so know Wisdom. 10.* They that would convince unrenewed Men of the Vanity and Insufficiency of all the courses they can take for attaining to true Contentment and Happiness, must bend their study much to find out both the utmost that natural Wit or Power can reach.

reach in things which are of themselves good, in order to that end, and likewise in what vile and abominable Courses in themselves such Men will readily place their Happiness, that so they may make clear to them how far short both are of giving them the least degree of true Happiness; for these are the subject of Solomon's Study here mentioned, namely, to know where about the wit of the best of unrenewed men is employed, which he calls *Wisdom*, and to know how base and vile courses (which he calls *Madness and Folly*) others of them follow, and so to make known that in both Men fall alike short of their fancied Happiness. *I gave my Heart to know Wisdom, and to know Madness and Folly.*

11. However there be several sorts of these who pursue their Happiness in the Earth, and several courses which they take for attaining to the same, some of them being taken up with the study of moral Virtues here called *Wisdom*; others of them giving themselves up to their sensual Pleasures, and of these some glorying and boasting in their Wickedness, as if it were their *Renown* (as the word translated *Madness* signifies) others again Brutish and Stupid, having no respect at all to their Credit, providing they may satisfy their Lusts, as the word *Folly* signifies, yet all of them shall come alike short of the Happiness they think to find, and the issue and result of their Courses shall be the same, even Misery and Vexation, seeing the former sort place their Righteousness in their *Wisdom*, 1 Cor. 1. 22. Rom. 10. 3. And the latter, their Heaven in the satisfaction of their Lusts, 2 Pet. 2. 13. For this which Solomon saith he perceived to be *Vexation of Spirit*, cannot be meant of his own Study of these presently mentioned, because that was at the direction of the Spirit of God, but of the result of the several courses which unrenewed Men take for Happiness; here set forth by the names of *Wisdom, Madness and Folly, I perceived* (saith he) *that they also is vexation of Spirit.* 12. However the Lord may to far favour the study of natural Wisdom, and moral Vertues, as to make Men find some kind of Sweetness and Contentment therein, that thereby they may be diverted from

from courses more dishonourable to him; And may also suffer men who have given themselves up to all vileness, to be for a time free of vexation, by reason of the *fearfulness of their Conscience*, 1 *Thes.* 5. 3. Yet will he assuredly execute the Sentence here past upon all who misken or neglect the *new and living way* to Blessedness through the Blood of Christ, sometimes in this Life, by crossing the wisest of their Plots, which being effectuate, would have contributed to their earthly Contentment, as he did to *Achitophel*, sometimes striking them in the midst of their Pleasure with his Terror, and other Judgments, as he did to *Belshazar*. *Dan.* 5. 6. *Nabal* and others, and all of them at last, by tormenting them with the *Worm that never dies*, so that they all shall find this to be Truth of God, whether they be seeking their Happinels in the *Wisdom* here spoken of, or in this *Madness and Folly*, their course shall prove *Vexation*, or, as the word signifies, *A gnawing or eating up of the Spirit*.

Verse XVIII. *For in much Wisdom is much Grief, and he that encreaseth Knowledge encreaseth Sorrow.*

Solomon here gives a Reason why the unrenewed Mans Wit can not lead him the right way to his lost Happinels, The summe of it is, that the more *Wisdom* any Man who neglects the Study of Reconciliation and fellowship with God, can attain unto, he shall still have the more grief, or as the Word signifies *Irritation of Spirit*, and the more progress he maketh in any other Study while this is neglected, he shall but heap the more *Sorrow* to himself. The truth whereof is evident if it be considered, that the more knowledge of that sort a Man have, he doth but see more clearly these many inconveniences and Miseries whereunto he is Subject especially in this Life (which these of meaner capacities, and of less proficiency in knowledge do not apprehend, and so have less *Vexation*) and yet can never see the true remedy of these, nor any sure Consolation against them. And consequently

sequently till saving light come in upon his mind, the more his knowledge of other things grows, he must still see himself the further from true Happiness. Now Solomon cannot be understood as speaking here of saving knowledge, considering that in other places of his writings he doth attribute contrary effects to that, Namely, that it brings much *Joy and Peace* to the Soul that hath it *Prov. 2, 10. & 3, 17.* And yet this is not spoken to deter from, or discourage in the Study of things natural, or Civil for the right end, not only to convince Man of his folly in apprehending any Happiness in such Studies while he neglects better, and so to ingadge him to the Study of that knowledge which brings much sweetness to the Soul *Pf: 104 34.* And is able to sweeten every other lawful Study which is made subservient to it *Pf: 111. 2.* And so the words may be looked upon as the *Tenth Argument*, to wean Mens hearts from seeking Happiness in this Earth, seeing grief will be the Issue of all their endeavours that way. Hence *Learn. 1.* While Men are void of the saving knowledge of God in Christ, which makes them live in his fear and Obedience, the clearer insight they have in other things, they draw the more grief and Sorrow upon themselves. The more clear thoughts they have of their duty to God, and of his properties, whereof something they may know by natures light *Rom: 1. 19. 20.* they cannot but have the more horreur of Conscience *Act: 24, 25.* seeing their Conscience cannot but accuse them for going against their light in many things *Rom: 2, 15.* And they in the mean time being ignorant of, or not heartily closing with the way of Reconciliation with God thorow Christ *1 Cor: 2, 8, 9.* the more clear their thoughts be anent the immortality of their Souls, they cannot but have the more grief, seeing they are uncertain concerning the future State thereof, and can have no well grounded hope that it shall be well with them *Pf: 49. 14.* And the more progress they make in knowledge, they cannot but find themselves the more Obnoxious to the envy of these whom they do excell *Sam: 18, 9.* In all which and many other respects, the truth

truth of this is evident *That in much Wisdom is much grief, and be-
 cause that encrease of Knowledge encrease of Sorrow.* 2. Although these
 that are endued with saving Knowledge, and are growing there-
 in, have ordinarily some Grief growing also, Namely Godly
 Sorrow, upon their more clear discovery of their own vileness
Rom. 7. 9. their Inability to return suitable thanks to God for
 his love 2 *Sam. 7. 18.* And the much dishonour that God gets
 by others *Pf. 119. 158.* Yet saving Knowledge is of it self apt to
 bring into the Soul, much Joy, Peace, and quietness of Spirit,
 and in the measure that Men have it, it doth always bring these
 to them. The great Grief that such have is mainly occasioned
 by the defect of that Knowledge *Prov. 30. 2.* every encrease of
 their Godly Sorrow, having comfort in the Bolome of it. 1 *Pet.*
1. 6. and alwayes Joy at the back of it *Pf. 30. 5.* For, what ever
 is said of this sort of Knowledge whereof Solomon speaks here,
 the contrary must agree to saving Knowledge; seeing his scope
 is to draw Men from seeking Happiness by the Study of the one,
 and engaging them to seek it by the Study of the other, therefore
 as in much of the *Wisdom* here spoken of is much Grief, so in much
 of saving Wisdom there must be much Joy, and as be that encrease
 of that sort of Knowledge which is here meant, encrease of Sorrow,
 so he that encrease of saving Knowledge, must increase his own
 Peace and Comfort. 3. The more clear discerning of other things
 Men have who are without saving Knowledge, and renewing
 Grace, the more exasperated, and imbittered do their Spirits grow
 both at the Lords dispensations which cross their corrupt Hu-
 mours *Isa. 8. 21.* And at the sight of the welfare of others who
 are better than themselves *Pf. 112. 9. 10.* And the more do they
 bend their wit to irritate and provoke the corruptions of others
 and to grieve their hearts who will not gratify their Lusts 1
Sam. 1. 6. For, this word translated Grief doth signify and may
 be translated Irritation, which both in the original and in our
 Language, admitts of an Active and a Passive signification for in
 much Knowledge is much Grief or Irritation: 4. The consideration of

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these sad Effects of *Grief and Sorrow*, which flow from all the Exercises of Mens Wit who neglect the Study of that *one thing needfull*, their Reconciliation with God, and living in his Fear and Obedience, and of the contrary Effects of Joy and Peace which follow upon the Study of saving Knowledge, should move Men that have sharpness of Wit, and time and means for improving the same, to take their Mindes off all other things as vain in order to their Happines, and make their prime Study to run in this Channel, how to know God in Christ as they ought to know him, and how to *walk before him unto well pleasing*; for these words may be looked upon as an Argument to wean Mens Heart from that Study which bringeth nothing but Grief and bitterness in the end, and fix them upon a more profitable one, to wit the Study of saving Knowledge which hath alwayes Joy and comfort following upon it: This is the Preachers main scope while he saith. *In much wisdom is much Grief, and he that encreaseth Knowledge encreaseth Sorrow*

CHAP.

CHAP: II.

The ARGUMENT.

Solomon in the former Chapter, having from his Experience evidenced the Insufficiency of the highest Improvements of the natural Mans Understanding in, and Endeavours about Created things, for affording of true and solid Happiness: He doth in this Chapter give a further experimental evidence how weak and unable the use and enjoyment of worldly things is, to produce that Happiness which is needful for Man. And in order to this, He 1. makes a relation with Grief of his deliberate and bent resolution (while formerly before his Conversion he was a stranger to God) to pursue his sinful pleasures, as being the rise of his other gross miscarriages: Together with his sad censure thereof (while he was now a Penitent) as producing nothing in the issue but emptiness, folly and disappointment, which he manages by an appeal to these Idols themselves, and the consciences of Men that follow them, if it be not so, ver. 1. 2. He gives some particular instances of the wayes he took for fulfilling his pleasures, as to the natural appetite and other Delights, (so far (as least) as to know what sweetness was in them, which all that time he tempered and mixed with a diligent study and care to manage his Royal Affairs with wisdom and reputation, ver. 3. He reckoneth up in seven branches what fair advantages he had of some choice creature comforts, for yielding him pleasure and satisfaction. As 1. Stately Buildings, ver. 4. 2. Plantations of all sorts for Meat, Drink Medicine and Profitable Fruits, ver. 4, 5. 3. Ponds or Pools of Water, as to contain Fishes for Food and Pleasure, so to serve for watering his Inclosures, ver. 6. 4. His numerous train of Servants of both Sexes, partly bought with his Money, taken in War, or hired from abroad, and partly born in his own House, ver. 7. 5. His great store of all sorts of Cattel beyond any of his Predecessors, ver. 7. 6. His great plenty of Money, Jewels, and other precious things obtained partly out of the Treasures of other Neighbouring Princes and Nations; and partly brought to him in Gifts and Presents by them that either Feared or loved him, ver. 8. And 7. Variety of excellent Musick, both Vocal and Instrumental, ver. 8. All which might seem to make up as perfect a Happiness as the creature could afford. 4. As a true Penitent he reflects seriously upon himself and his sinful courses, and passes a sad censure upon them, ver. 9, 10, 11. Which reflections of his are 1. Upon his outward condition in the World, positively that he was great both in Dignity and Esteem, and comparatively even beyond his Predecessors. ver. 9, 2. Upon his inward dispo-

stitution and frame of Spirit under all these enjoyments, In his wisdom remaining with him, by which he was endued with the knowledge of things natural, and ability to manage his Affairs with prudence and discretion, ver. 9. And in his renewed denial to pursue his sensual pleasures keeping no restraint either on his outward Senses, or inward Affections, the satisfaction of which, he esteemed his greatest portion, while he was thus at a distance with God, ver. 10. And the censure he passes upon the whole is, that all was emptiness and Vanity; that they had eaten up his Spirit with Vexation, and that there was no profit remaining in, or (as in the Original over or above) all those, beside disappointment and dissatisfaction, ver. 11. 5. He institutes a comparison between the study of natural Wisdom, or moral Prudence, and the voluptuous enjoyment of creature comforts, ver. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. Where 1. He declares after serious search (wherein perhaps few could outstrip him) the insufficiency of both for bringing about true Happiness, ver. 12. (2.) Yet he doth prefer the one (to wit, the study of natural Wit or Prudence) to the other (to wit, the sensual enjoyment of creature delights, which he calls folly) as being a good gift of God serving as an handmaid to serving knowledge, and to discover the dangers and profits in a mans ordinary converse, which the voluptuous man (being in the dark, and not having his eyes in his head) cannot do, ver. 13, 14. 3. He shew's wherein these two disagree, that the same events for substance and kind are common to the morally wise, and the voluptuous liver, ver. 14. Illustrated in his own case, which made him finally to condemn that way of wisdom as altogether useless, And which mistaken opinion he presently censures as vanity, ver. 15. 6. He gives some instances of these effects which his so much desired satisfaction from natural wisdom, or creature comforts, and his disappointments therein did work upon him. As 1. That the followers of these, and their endeavours (as all things else) after Happiness that way, are equally obnoxious to Oblivion and Death, ver. 16. 2. That in spite of impatience of Spirit, through the disappointments and vanity of these courses, he was finally weary of his life, ver. 17. 3. The inordinate hatred and loathing of all his labour in these things wherein he sought his Happiness, as being things he debored to part with to some other, and yet knew not what he would prove, or how he would manage or improve, these things for which he had taken so much pains, and manifested so much Wisdom and Prudence in acquiring of them, which sinful detestation he censures in himself as Vanity, and a sad effect of his pursuing Happiness that way, while he was estranged from God, ver. 18, 19. And 4. That this his seeking of Happiness in these things, and being frustrated thereof, made him careful to persuade his own heart to despair of ever finding Happiness in them, ver. 20. Especially considering that men of the greatest parts laboured to leave all their Purchase to others, that never took pains about it, ver. 21. Which course he censures also as Vanity, and as a great evil both of sin and punishment, ver. 22. Of which course he gives this reason, that men by all his outward pains, and inward vexation about earthly things, is so far from any real profit or true comfort, that on the contrary he shall have sorrow and grief, and by his violence in this pursuit bereave himself of his nights rest, ver.

21. 22. And this also he censures to be vanity, that a man should thus torment himself in so hilly pursuing after that which can hardly be overtaken, and if overtaken cannot give him comfort, but totally grieve him. And 7. In the last 3 verses of this chapter, is clear that the intent of this Discourse concerning the vanity of earthly things in order to true Happiness, was not to deprive men of the lawful use and comfort of the creatures, he doth before he proceed further in that subject give a short sum of the true Happiness which is attainable in this life. Where 1. He describes somewhat of the nature of that true Happiness attainable in this life, about which he had ver. 1. inquired so much (being afraid to give a fuller description of it) saying, That it consists much in a sweet conjunction of these two: the one in relation to the Body, is the sober and cheerful use of all lawful earthly delights. The other relating to the soule, is that the soule enjoy some Good, suitable and satisfactory to it, which can be no other than the chief Good, ver. 2. 4. Which he confirms from his own knowledge, ver. 2. 4. And from the advantages he had as of enjoying creature comforts, so as opportunities to seek and improve them beyond many others, ver. 2. 4. 2. The more to conciliate mens respect to and endeavours after this true Happiness, he describes both the blessed condition of them that search after it, ver. 26. and the miserable condition of them that neglect it, ver. 26. By all which it is evident (which is the scope of the Chapter) How insufficient the pursuit and enjoyment of earthly Delights is to afford that true Happiness which is needful for man.

Ecclesiastes, Chap. II.

Verse I, I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and behold this also is Vanity.

II. I said of Laughter, It is mad, and of Mirth, what doth it?

SOLOMON having proven from his own Experience, the insufficiency of the natural Mans understanding, improved to the outmost in the contemplation of all Created things, and humane endeavours about them, for producing the least degree of true Peace and Happiness to him while he remains a stranger to fellowship with God, he doth here give a further instance from his own Experience also, to prove how far short the use and enjoyment of the choicest of created

delights is, to bring him any nearer to that Happiness which he seeks after. And for this end, he doth *First*, relate with how much deliberation, and with what benefit of Spirit he had pursued sensual delights, and by repeated commands had prest his own *Heart* (as if it had been too slow in the pursuit) to try the utmost that creature comforts could do for satisfying of him. *Go to now* (saith he) *I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure*, whereby cannot be meant his provoking of his Soul to spiritual Mirth and pleasure in Communion with God, and in his Praises; which was the Exercise he should have been upon, as his Father had been often before him, for that would have had a sweeter Issue, and more comfortable effects than he found this to have in his own Experience, therefore by this Language of his to his Heart, is signified his giving up of himself, to the excess of Earthly and sensual delights which now he is relating with grief. And this Communing with his Heart seems most fitly to be referred to the beginning of his defection from God (as being that frame of Spirit whence his more grievous falls had their rise) whilst he was neither enjoying that spiritual Soul-ravishing pleasure, and Mirth which sometimes he had in fellowship with God, especially when he wrote that excellent *Song of Songs*, for then he could not have perswaded his Heart to seek pleasures of another nature, nor yet was come to that height of Wickedness which he was left unto, before his recovery, as appears by comparing this verse with the third, where he saith that he was *acquainting his heart with Wisdom*, his Heart was only beginning to be inflamed with the love of sensual delights, and his defection from the Lord fast growing. *Secondly*. That all who read this, may take it for a penitents relation of his former sinful frame of Spirit, and so may be affraid of falling into the like, before he enlarge it further, he subjoyns his Censure of it, inviting all to consider, that the Issue of this dangerous resolution of his, to pursue Carnal pleasures had proven to him in his sad Experience, nothing but emptiness, or disappointment of any true satisfaction. Verse 1.

and

And Thirdly. He enlarges that censure which he past when he came to himself as a true penitent, upon his former sinful frame, considering it both as it did break out visibly in the expressions and gestures of the outward Man, here called *Laughter*, and as it did affect his heart within, while he delighted himself in sinful speculations, which he calleth *Mirth*, pronouncing the former to be *Madness*, (or as the word signifies, vain Glorious Boasting of that which is matter of shame to any *endued with the Exercise of Holy Reason*) and the Latter to be of no worth, or *doing nothing* at all for bringing to Man any true satisfaction, but rather much to the contrary. And that Men transported with their pleasures, may be made apprehensive that this will be the Issue of their course, he useth a very moving strain of Speech directing the same to that Idol Pleasure, and that by Interrogation, *what doth it*, or *what doest thou*? Thereby as it were giving a challenge to the Conscience of all sinful Men, to condescend if they be able (and the expression imports they are not) upon any true profite they have by their way. Hence *Learn*. 1. As the Lord hath given this preeminence to Man above all other Creatures in the World, that he can reflect on by his by past temper and Actions, and Commune with his own heart for the Future, which he should make use of for restraining himself from sin *Neb: 6, 11*. For reclaiming himself therefrom when he is fallen into it *Jer: 8, 6*. For encouraging his heart in duty *Pf: 42, 5*. Especially to trusting in God *Pf: 16, 2*. And to praise him *Pf: 103, 1*. In which and the like places there are Holy Soliloquies of a Christian with himself; so when the Lord is provoked to withdraw His Gracious presence, Man can do nothing but abuse this privilege, to the blowing up of his own corruptions, and encouraging his Heart to Courses destructive to his own Peace and comfort, and which will prove bitterness to him in the Latter end, for, thus was it with *Solomon*, at the time to which he here Relates, while the Lords Spirit was withdrawn, and he was entering upon a course of defection from the Lord *I said in my heart*,

go to now! I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy Pleasure.
 2. Even these whose Souls have been sometimes ravished with spiritual Mirth and delight in God, and have very long enjoyed those pleasures that are Heavenly, even they by their falling lazie and secure *Cant: 5. 2.* Or waking proud because of it *1 Cor: 12. 7.* May provoke the Lord to withdraw so far that they will lose the impression of that sweetness they have formerly found, and apprehend pleasure only to be had in Earthly delights, and be so eager in the pursuit of these, as if there were no better to be had. So that these who have gotten much of their Youth, and a great part of their Elder Dayes past over in the fear of the Lord and Fellowship with Him, have Reason even unto gray Hairs and Death to be working out their Salvation in Fear and Trembling, least these sparkles of unmortified Corruptions which have been long kept at under, and are not quite extinct in the best, may break out in a flame, even in their old Age; for, this Man of whom we have Ground to conclude that much of his Youth, and the great part of his Life, was spent in fellowship with God, is notwithstanding at this, toward the evening of his dayes I said in my heart go to now, I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure. 3. What ever opposition there be in the Hearts of Men to sinful Temptations (as somewhat of that sort may be found in the unregenerate, from the clearness of their light, apprehending the hazard of their sinful wayes *Rom: 2. 15. AB: 24. 25.* And much more must be in the regenerate in whom the seeds of Grace alwayes remain *1 John 2. 9.*) Yet while the special Influences of the Lords Spirit which powerfully divert the heart from sinful speculations *Psa 119. 36.* 37. and actuate his Grace *Cant: 4. 16.* are suspended, the corrupt part will so uncessantly incite, and so imperiously command the whole Man, to go over the Belly of that opposition, that even a renewed Child of God is in hazard not only to be overtaken by the surprisall of temptations, and suddain motions of his Corruptions, but deliberately to go after these, especially such

such as promise to him much sensual pleasure; How desperate is the Wickedness of the best Mans heart? And how great that Mercy and Love of God that follows after him in such Courses, and powerfully reclaims him? For here *Solomon* setting forth that sinful frame of Spirit, whence his gross defection had the rise, represents himself speaking to his own Heart as if it had been slow in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, (and no wonder considering his great Light, and former Experiences of much sweetness in Religious Exercises) and urging it to go over all opposition for attaining to these *I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure* 4. A true penitent will not only with grief call to mind his gross External Sins, but also with what Benul of Spirit he hath been carried on to them, and will make Language of his sinful purposes, that he may make himself more vile in his own Eyes, and will not stand to publish the same, when his so doing may restrain, or reclaim others from the like, or prevent the despair of wakened Sinners, affrighted at the sight of their own vileness, and the disappointment of that satisfaction which they expected from their Idols: for, for these and the like ends doth this penitent Preacher reflect upon his own sinful temper, and relate the Language of his heart in pursuing his Carnal pleasures concluding with all, and calling others to consider, that the Issue of such Courses is nothing but Vanity *I said in my heart, go to now, I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure, and behold this also is Vanity.* 5. What ever use of corrupt Wit, and Reason Men may have for accomplishing their sinful pleasures and increasing their delight in them, the same is nothing else but *Madness* in Gods sight, seeing they are but sharing of the beasts Happiness, and while they express most joy in the satisfaction of their Lusts, they are but *Laughing* at their own Fetters whereby they are held Captives to the Devil; and but like mad Men, gathering fowel to that Fire wherein for their Carnal pleasures, here called *Laughter*, they shall for ever weep and gnash their Teeth *Haile of Laughter*

ter it is Mad. 6. As these who do most madly pursue their Sinfull pleasures, cannot possibly condescend upon any profit they have by their so doing, and yet are very hardly brought to consider that it is so; so it is a prevailing way for Ministers to deal with People, and for People to deal with themselves, to put their Conscience by questions to condescend upon the Advantage they have by their way, and sometimes to direct their speech to these Idols they serve as their God, and as it were Examine them, as Men do Theeves or Spyes that haunt their houses, to see if they can shew men (which is impossible for them to do) what profit they bring to them that serve them: for as this question may be taken as put to *Mirth* it self, or to the Conscience of the voluptuous Man concerning it, *what doth it?* Or as it may be read from the original *what dost thou?* Imports that Mens sinfull pleasures contribute nothing to their Happiness and true satisfaction, but much every way to the contrary, exprest before by *Excitation of Spirit*; So it imports an impossibility of getting an answer, condescending upon any true Advantage Men have by their sinfull pleasures. And this forme of Speech is used by Solomon to rouse the Consciences of Men that serve their pleasures, and to convince them of their Madnes in so doing. *I said of Laughter it is Mad, and of Mirth, what doth it.*

Verse 3, *I sought in my heart to give my self unto Wine, (yet acquainting mine heart unto Wisdom) and to lay hold on Folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of Men, which they should do under Heaven, all the days of their Life,*

Solomon having given a summe of his sinfull Resolution to pursue his pleasures which was in his heart, when he first began to make defection from God, with his sad censure thereof now being a penitent, in the former verses, He doth here give particular instances of the Courses he took for attaining to the same, and *First*, he doth further enlarge his pursuit after them

in two Expressions. The one is, that he *sought in his heart*, or as the word signifies, he did deliberate and search into every art, how he *might give himself* (or as the word is draw out his Flesh, or lay out himself to the full) *unto Wine*, under which is comprehended all delicats which are satisfying to the natural appetite. The other is, that he *sought in his heart to lay hold on Folly*, (for the first words of the verse are to be constructed with these which follow after the Parenthesis in the text) by this *Laying hold* he means, his apprehending with all his might, and the outmost intencion of his strength of minde and Body, and so bringing into his possession, as the Original Word signifies: And by this *Folly* whereof he thus tooke hold is meant those sensual pleasures, which he now being a penitent judgeth to be nothing else but *Folly*, though he looked otherwise upon them before: Now this his expression of *giving himself unto Wine*, it not to be understood as if he had given up himself to that Excessive use of the Creatures whereunto Drunkards and Belly-Gods addict themselves, for though we read of many vile practises of his under his defection, yet we find nothing of that sort, beside what is here said, of his *giving himself unto Wine*; neither yet can this be understood of the moderate and Holy use of the Creatures, because it is ordinary with him when he speaks of that (as he doth frequently in this Book) to commend it as Gods gift, and allowance to his own, while as he doth condemn this as *Folly*, and as producing *Vexation of Spirit* Verse 11. Therefore this seems to be understood of a middle way betwixt these which he studied to wit, that he would so far give up himself to sensible delights that he might know the outmost of the sweetness and comfort that was in them, and yet might not turn altogether sensual, and Butlishly excessive in the use of these things. And *next*, to confirme that it was this middle way which he then minded to follow, he doth with the mentioning of it, Intermix as it were in a Parenthesis, another Study which he intended to temper with this, namely his *acquainting of his heart with Wisdom*, whereby

is meant especially his skill of Governing his Royal Affairs, for at his worst, there is no ground to think that he did grossly mis-carry as Drunkards do, and consequently he hath Studied how to restrain himself from such excesses as might stain his Reputation, and for that end to carry himself at the beginning of his defection, at least in the externals of Religion, as he might hide from the Eyes of his Subjects and others, his begun defection from the Lord. And *Thirdly* he shows what was his end in this Study of his (which was indeed a singular one, to make a Mixture of these two, to give up himself to a very full enjoyment of sensual delights) and to carry on withall the Exercise and reputation of his great Wisdom) and that was that he might *see*, or experimentally know as the Word is translated *Eccle: 1, 16.* what was that *chief good* which mortal Men should endeavour to obtain, and may come to the enjoyment of, *along their few and numbered dayes* (as the original is) that they have to live in this World, whereby it appears that he doth here relate what frame of Spirit he had under his begun defection, and estrangement from the Lord, seeing the chief good is now a seeking with him, and is sought after by him in such things as are exprest in this verse, in *Wine*, and other things of that nature which he now calls *Folly*. Hence *Learn. 1.* A true penitent will not satisfy himself, with general Confessions of his former sinfull course, as if he had been but in a common Transgression, whereof few are free, and so had no other matter of shame than other Men, but will condescend upon particulars, both what unworthy idols he hath served, and how much his wit and strength have been employed in serving of them, that so he may be the more vile in his own Eyes, and may make clear to others, the way of the prevailing of temptations, that they may be restrained, or reclaimed from giving way to the like; for after a general Confession of his sinful purpose to pursue his pleasures, he doth now instance, the particulars that carried his heart away from God, and how much he was taken up with them *I sought in my heart to give myself unto Wine.*

Wine. 2. There are Snares and Temptations wherewith the Godly are readily overtaken, not only in and about things of themselves sinful, but likewise, and most ordinarily, in and about these things which are in their use lawful and necessary, Satan knows that we least suspect, and so are most easily inlured by Temptations in these things; for it is imported here that *Solomon* found a Snare and Temptation even in these things, which such a Man as he, might Lawfully have made use of in greater Variety and plenty than many other Men *I sought in my heart to give my self unto Wine.* 3. When the Serious Exercise of a Mans Wit is to lay out himself, in taking the outmost of the comfort which any created thing can yeild unto him; though the same were never so lawful in the moderate use of it, then it becomes his sin, and his Idol, for, so doth *Solomon* describe the sin that was in his course that he *sought in his heart*, which signifies his most Serious Deliberation *to give himself*, or as it is in the Original, to draw out his Flesh; by which is meant his outward Man, and the Actions thereof *unto Wine.* 4. When the Children of the Lord are not seeking in their heart to give themselves away to his Service and Obedience, that so they may have more near Communion with himself, which should be their most serious Study. *Isa 26. 9.* they will be then seeking in their heart how to give themselves away to these base and unworthy things, which God hath given to them to serve and cheir them in serving him; for, here *Solomon* now begun to be estranged from the Lord, is giving himself away to that which God hath given Man to preserve his Health. *1 Tim: 5. 23.* And to cheir his heart in the Praises of his Maker *Pf: 104. 15. I sought in my heart to give my self unto Wine.* 5. How much use of Wit and Reason soever Men may have in the perswance of Earthly delights, yet while they are seeking in their hearts, to give themselves away to these things they are but taking hold of *Folly*, and though the Foolish sinner do not so look upon his way while he is pursuing his Idols, yet when God awakes him whether in Wrath or in Mercy, he will let and be forced to say

say that he hath been doing nothing but taking hold of Folly, for *Solomon* saith, he Exercised his Wit how to give himself unto Wine, whereby is meant all these pleasures that estranged him from God, and now being a penitent he judges his so doing to be nothing else but a taking hold of Folly *I sought in my heart &c. to lay hold on Folly.* 6. As Mens corrupt hearts left destitute of the special presence of Gods Spirit will incline them in some respects to the study of Wisdom while they are pursuing their Idols, that they may manage their outward Affairs so as they may be the fitter to possess the sweetness they aim at in the injoyment of these Idols, that they may be the more able to defend their way with shew of Reason, to hide from others their defection from God, and to keep their Reputation unstained: So may the Lord vouchsafe upon them even then, the Exercise of Wit and Reason, that he may make use of them to do something for his publick Honour before the World, while they are doing him much dishonour privately, and that he may ingage them the more when they come to themselves to employ their Wit for him; For, *Solomon* now estranged from the Lord while he was *giving himself unto Wine* and so *laying hold on Folly*, was notwithstanding *acquainting his heart with wisdom.* 7. Satan doth not at the first tempt Men to that height of Wickedness which he intends to have them at afterward, he will not only permitt, but incite them unto such a wise ordering of their carriage both in Civil and Religious performances, as may hide from others the tendency of their way, and silence for a time their own Conscience *See. 2 Sam: 15. 7. Prov: 7. 14.* Counting it sufficient at first to get their Zeal in Religions duties abated, and the delight of the heart drawn toward these things which may prove an inlet and occasion to further Temptations; for thus was it with *Solomon* at the beginning of his defection from the Lord, *he sought in his heart to give himself unto Wine, yet so as he acquainted his heart with Wisdom*, which may be understood both of his wise Managing the Affairs of his Kingdome, and his visible respect to Religious Ordinances, which

which afterward he shook off when he Established Idolatry *1 King 11. 7. 8.* It is a great guilt in Men to allow themselves in every way of using lawful comforts which doth not disturb their Reason, or make them incapable of managing their civil Affairs, and of ordering their External Carriage in Religious duties, while in the mean time the bent of their heart is after their sensual satisfaction in the use of any Earthly delight, though never so lawful, for there is no ground to think that *Solomon* did so give himself to Wine that he turned a Drunkard, or indisposed himself for managing his affairs Civil or Ecclesiastick in a prudent manner, yea the contrary is intimated here while he saith, that when he gave himself to Wine He was acquainting his heart with Wisdom, and yet he saith now being a penitent that he was even then *taking hold of Folly. 9.* A true penitent reclaimed from sin, should impartially reflect upon, and relate as is needful, both how far he hath given up himself to pursue his Idols, and what proofs of undeserved respect from the Lord he hath had continued with him, and hath abused in the time of his defection, that so he may be the more vile in his own Eyes, the more thankful to the Lord, and engaged now to imploy his wit and parts for him, for, *Solomon* being now a penitent relates both how far he gave up himself to his pleasures, and how far the restraining Grace of God was imployed for him at that time, not suffering him altogether to lose the Exercise of his Wisdom, *I gave my heart to Wine, yet acquainting my heart with Wisdom. 10.* So easily are the sparkles of unmortified Corruption inflamed, even with the very mentioning of sinful courses, especially such as have much sensual pleasure in them, that there is need with the mentioning of them to mention also the Folly, Bitterness, and hazard of them. Therefore doth *Solomon* in the former words immediately subjoyn his Censure of his course as Madness, to his expressing of his purpose to pursue his pleasures, and here while he speaks of his giving himself unto Wine, he calls it a *taking hold of Folly. 11.* As there is some chief good to be attained in this life, which

which every Man should seek after, and do something every day of his Life for attaining to, so, nothing is to be esteemed that good, but only that which Men may enjoy *all their Days*, and which may be able to yield them true comfort in all the variety of Conditions they can be in, and this only the favour of God, and fellowship with him in Christ by the Spirit is able to do, Ps. 34. 12. &c. For, here Solomon supposes such a good to be, and to be sought after while he saith *till I might see what is that Good for the Sones of Men which they should do under Heaven all the dayes of their Life.* 12. Even these who have not only been determined and clear concerning that wherein Mans chief good doth consist, but have been long in possession and injoyment of it, may be for a time so earnest in the pursuit of their sensual pleasures, and so forgetful of what they have formerly found in fellowship with God, that their chief good may be a seeking to them, and any apprehensions they have of it, may be that it is in these things that are most contrary to it, For, here Solomon expressing the end of his forementioned course, speaks as a Man in the mist concerning that true good, and as apprehending it to be in sinful delights, such as Wine, to which he saith he gave up himself, while he saith *till I might see what was that good for the Sones of Men which they should do, all the dayes of their Life.*

Verse

Ver. IV. I made me great Parks; I builded me Stalls, I planted

me Vineyards. (and I set of gardens) And I set

me Vines, I made me Gardens and Orchard, and I planted Trees in

most of them of all kind of Fruits, as the willow tree, the poplar tree,

VI. I made me Pools of Waters, to water the wood that should bring

forth fruit. Trees, and I set of them, and I set of them, and I set of them,

VII. I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in

my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle,

above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered

VIII. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar trea-

sure of Kings, and of the provinces. I gat me men singers and

Women singers, and the daughters of the sons of mens, as mu-

sical instruments, and thus of all sorts.

THis penitent Preacher having with grief related his former sin-

ful purpose to pursue his pleasures, he doth here reckon

out, what vain Advantages he had fitting him for enjoying as

much thereof as any Man could expect to find, for the choise

and flower of all the Inferiour Creatures could yeeld unto him,

As. 1. His stately buildings of all Sorts, which might serve not

only for Commodious Habitation, but for strength against his

Enemies, and monuments of his power and greatness, as may

be seen in Kings 7. 2. &c. and chap. 9. 15. &c. 2. His planta-

tions of all sorts, whence he might have Meat, Drink, Me-

dicines, and variety of Fruits for profit, or pleasure; so that his

dwelling seemed another Eden or Paradise, as the word translated

Orchards is in the Original *Hesek* 4. 1. 3. His ponds or pools

of water, both to contain Fish for Pleasure and Food, for the

words translated Pools of water, is rendered Fish-pools *Cant.* 7. 2.

And likewise to water his various inclosures which for largeness

he calls a Wood or Fortress *Jer.* 4. 4. His numerous train of at-

tendants of both Sexes, and of these some strangers which he

got to himself; that is either bought with Money, or took in war,

or byred from abroad, from whom the best of the Customs in

for-

foreign places might be learned, and some borne in his house who in some case (according to the Law) were his own for ever **Ecc. 2. 6.** And would love his Family as their own native soil, and so the more faithfully manage his affairs: **9.** His great store of all sorts of Cattle about which these Servants of his might be employed, and whereof he had greater abundance than any of his Predecessors: **ver. 7. 6.** His great plenty of the best sorts of Mony, Jewels and other precious things, and these out of the Treasures of neighbouring Princes and Countries who were either subdued by him, or from their reverence and respect to him, or for fear of him, did send the best of their Riches in Gifts and presents to him: **1. King. 4. 23, 24.** And **7.** For banishing of sad thoughts which might be intermixed with all these injoyments, he had variety of excellent Musick, both Vocab (and that both of Men and Women) and Instrumental called *the delights of the sons of men*, because therewith Men used to be much ravished: All which several might seem to make up the most perfect earthly Happiness that Man can attain unto, and may be conceived to be here reckoned out so particularly for two causes mainly: **First**, that his sad Censure which he passeth afterwards upon all these as insufficient for satisfying the Soul; and unworthy to be chosen and delighted in as the Happiness of a Reasonable creature, may have the more weight, and be the better believed, seeing he doth not undervalue that whereof he had not Experienced himself; and so might be suspected to envy in others, but what himself had long and in a full measure enjoyed. And **Secondly**, that by reflecting upon the Lords liberality to him in these injoyments, his might the more aggravate his own ingratitude, and promote his Repentance, having made such desertion from the Lord after all these engagements, and however the use of the things themselves be not simply sinful, nor business about them, to be absolutely condemned, especially in such a man as he, not considering the event, (his falling from God) and what himself intimated in the following

words.

words of the excess of his delight in these things *ver. 10.* And what the Lord seems sharply to insinuate to him immediately after the finishing of these great works, not only of Hazard, but of an inclination in him, to abuse all. *1. Kin. 9. 6.* It is not unsafe to think that his estrangement and defection from the Lord, had its rise from the excess of his delight in the things here mentioned, and that while he was employed about them, as he here relates, his defection hath been already begun upon his Spirit, as was hinted before. Hence *Learn 1.* There is in the best such imperfection of love to God, and such strength of love to themselves, that though they stand in need of frequent Exhortations, encouragements and threatnings, to put them to that work which concerns Gods Glory and their own spiritual good, yet will they freely and of their own accord without these, sett about other works for their own pleasure and satisfaction, which will take them longer time, more pains and Expences; for, even *Solomon* behoved to be prest by frequent charges and manifold encouragements to the worke of building of the Temple. *1 Chron. 22. 6. 11. 16.* For which many materials, and workmen also were provided to his hand, and yet without any of these he is of his own accord forward enough to make great workes for himself, one whereof to wit his own house did take him much more time, and probably much more expences than the building of the house of the Lord, and this his forwardness, in these works that were for himself only, and his eying of himself too much in making of them, is insinuate in this word *to me* so oft repeated in the Original, *I made to me great Works, and I built to me houses* &c. *2.* The Lord hath wisely hedged about earthly pleasures with much toil and pains, and hath made the attaining of them very difficult; so that a man shall spend a great part of his time and strength before he come to enjoy that measure of them wherein with any shew of Reason he can expect the least satisfaction; and this he hath done, that man who can promise but little time to himself, or strength to pursue these Earthly delights, may de-

pair of finding satisfaction in them; and so may be moved to inquire whether there be not a shorter cut to happiness, and may betake himself to the study of Reconciliation with God in Christ and fellowship with him, wherein he may be sure to find true pleasure, and may come at the same sooner and with less pains; for Solomon who had as much use of his wit, as any that shall come after him, *Ecc. 2, 11.* Having proposed pleasure to himself, he tells here what he had to do; before he attained to it, how many things were necessary for it, and yet that all came short of giving him satisfaction. *I made me great works, I builded, I planted &c.* Fallen man may read his Misery by sins upon his outward condition in the World, upon all the Creatures, and his endeavours about them for happiness: while he builds houses he may consider that the open air is hurtfull to him, wherein he could have lived in innocency without cloathing; and that now there is not a Commodious habitation for Man exiled out of Paradise, till he be at the pains to make it: while he plants he should remember the Curse upon the Earth, for his sake, that it will not yeild him what is comfortable and usefull for him, till he sweat for it: and while he makes Pools for water, he should remember that the Sea and Clouds are not so willing as sometime they were to serve him, who is now become so prone to abuse his fellow Creatures; for upon these things and mans endeavours about them, and disappointment of satisfaction in them, Solomon reads *Vanity and vexation of Spins*, and reckons them out here as things he is to pass that sentence upon ver. 11. *I made me great works, I builded, I planted, I made me Pools, &c. And all is Vanity.* The Lord hath not (as in justice he might) wholly deprived man of his Dominion over the Creatures, but hath left in them some inclination to be subject to him, and (upon his pains and labour about them) serviceable and comfortable to him: that when the Earth yields him fruit, or any other Creature serves him, he may acknowledge the Mercy of his maker, who hath not altogether forsaketh this to him, and thereby

may be brought to consider, how sweet that Estate was whences
 he is fallen: to seek Reparation of it in Christ, and so to be the
 more engaged to his Obedience. For, here Solomon with Labour
 and pains, hath the best of the Creatures serving him, yielding
 him matter of Comfort and Praise, and engaging him to his Ma-
 sters Obedience, and all this abundance he reckons out (as for
 other Reasons so for this) that he may commend Gods Goodness
 in vouchsafing that upon him which he did abuse. *I made me great
 works, I planted, I builded, I made me pools, and I got me men Ser-
 vants. &c. 9.* The Lord who hath made of one Blood all nations
 of men *Act. 17. 26.* and doth not respect outward differences in
 offering and bestowing his Grace. *Gal. 3. 28.* hath so ranked
 men as to their outward State and Condition, that some of
 them should be Servants to others, and others should be Masters
 and have many under them; that his indifferent offering of his
 Grace to both sorts, and bestowing it often upon the meanest, may
 the more commend the freedome thereof; that those whom his
 providence hath subjected outwardly unto others, may lack
 true spiritual freedome, and to be equal sharers with their Masters
 of spiritual priviledges; and those who have many others under
 them, may be the more engaged to serve him, and if they do
 not, he may have the more witnesses against them; for, so doth
 providence dispose here that Solomon hath *servants and maids, and
 servants born in his house. 6.* The observation of the Lords Libe-
 rality even in the most common and ordinary gifts thereof, were
 it but in the bestowing of carnal, the more so, and preservation
 of them, should not be thought an Excessive unfixable; for the
 greatest Spirits and the most eminent Persons, who stand in need
 of these things, for their cloathing, nourishment and delight.
 Men prove themselves brutish in their disposition, who being
 served by the beasts, do not take notice of an Lords bounty, and
 how far he proves his Liberality to them in that and things of that
 nature, beyond others; for here this penitent man reflects upon
 this, and relates it as a proof of the Lords bounty toward him, and

and that with grief considering it had been abused by him) *that he had great possessions of great and small cattel, above all that were before him in Jerusalem.* 7. Were men never so great and eminent in the World, they should not keep an idle train of Servants and attendants merely for the maintaining of their Grandure, much less for serving of their Lusts, they should keep none but these for whom they have both maintainance and Employment; for Solomon hath many Servants, but he hath much Work for them, he hath great buildings to make, Vinyards to dress, Cattel great and small &c. which require many hands and much service, and therefore he hath *servants and maids, and servants born in his house* 8. The Lord is absolute owner and disposer of all the Riches and Treasures in the World, he can direct men to the Bowels of the Earth, where Riches ly, and can take away the Treasures of Kings and Provinces from them who have them, and Inrich others with them at his pleasure, they that want such things should depend upon him for their supply, who can it he think it fit, bring them to their hand, and these that have them should imploy them for his Glory who can strip them of them when he will, for so Solomon acknowledges *I got me silver and gold and the peculiar Treasure of Kings and Provinces,* 9. The Lord may cast plenty of outward things to the hands of men who he knows will abuse them, which dispensation of his is Holy, seeing he withholds only that influence for the right improving of them, which he is not bound to give, and in the Issue proves Gracious to his own, discovering their corruption in their abuse of these things for their humbling and commending his Mercy in pardoning of them, the consideration whereof should make these who want such things, Submissive, and construct well of the Lord as intending their good thereby, and these who have them in abundance, suspicious of themselves, lest they abuse them, and fearfull of snares to their Souls in them, for it is clear that all these great houses, buildings &c. were abused by Solomon 1 King: 11: 7, 8. And yet after he was corrected and humbled,

Mercy

Merely was manifested to him. 10. So empty are all the Creatures, and unable to give satisfaction, that when man hath his eye fullest of the most delectable sights, that they can afford him, his taste and smell refreshed with the most delicious of them, and hath under his hand, abundance of all sorts of Riches, to provide him with things necessary for the time to come, his heart will readily be frequented with sad thoughts, in the midst of all, and many cares and fears will readily mix themselves with all his enjoyments. Therefore after Solomon hath all the former, he must provide *Singing men, and singing women, and musical Instruments of all sorts*, to divert his heart from sad thoughts, incident to him in the midst of his pleasures. 11. The Children of men as such, are prone to place their chief delight, in these things that satisfy their outward senses: only the Children of the Lord having the presence of his Spirit, can delight themselves in him, and make his Praises, and spiritual Exercises their Recreation; for Solomon speaking of this Musick of the voice and Instruments made use of to sweeten the forementioned comforts, he calls it *The delights of the sons of men*.

Verse 9. *So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.*

HAVING at large branched out his earthly enjoyments, he comes now to shew what Observations, after serious reflecting, he made upon himself, and his courses: The *First* is concerning his outward estate and condition in the World, and this he expresses in *Positively*, that by the abundance of these outward enjoyments formerly mentioned, he was *Great*, the word signifies both to be brought to a very high pitch of Worldly Excellency, and Dignity of any sort, and likewise to have a great deal of esteem, and weight in the mindes of others in the World. 2. He expresses the same *Comparatively*, that he had more of both these added to him, than any of his Predecessors, and that through the

the blessing of God upon him, and his affairs, in Reference to which this word *increased* is usually taken in Scripture Ps: 119. 14. Whereby it appears he doth now take notice of that greatness, as a performance of the Lords promise to him 1 King. 3. 13. The next thing he observed of himself, and the Lords dispensation with him, relates to the inward Disposition and frame of his Spirit, under all these enjoyments, and that is *that his wisdom remained with him*, or as the word signifies, was his constant Servant and attendant: Now though it cannot be decayed, but that under his greatest defection from the Lord, His saving Wisdom, (for the habit of it,) did remain with him, that being the seed of God which abideth 1 Job 3. 9. and one of these gifts which are without Repentance Rom: 11. 29. Yet it seems most agreeable to the purpose in hand to take this *Wisdom* for that singular gift of knowledge of things natural which *Solomon* had, and for his civil Wisdom or moral prudence, for managing his affairs and keeping up his Reputation, considering that even that would readily be suspected to be blasted under so great enjoyment of sensuall pleasures, and especially that he passes censure afterward upon all the courses, which by the conduct of this Wisdom he followed as *Vanity and vexation of Spirit*. Hence Learn, 1. The Lord who sees it fit to keep some of the dearest of his People very low and despised for their outward condition Ps: 119. 141. deals very liberally with others of them in things of that nature, so as to gain them much reverence and respect in the mindes of the men of this World, who ordinarily bestow their esteem upon the account of these things, that such of his People may have the fairer opportunity to do good to the Souls of others; for, so liberally did he deal with *Solomon* in the particulars fore-mentioned, that this was the result thereof mainly in the mindes of others, which he here expresses, *so I was great*, or as the word signifies, Honourably thought of. 2. Whatever outward greatness, and esteem in the World, the Lord vouchsafe upon any of his Children, they ought carefully to observe and acknowledge the

the same, that so they may the better see, how great their Obligation is to Thankfulness to the Lord, and how great their guilt is in not walking answerably to it, and so be the more humbled; for, so doth *Solomon* (and doubtless now being a Penitent for such causes) reflect upon and acknowledge that greatness, which Gods goodness had advanced him to. *So I was great and increased, &c.* 3. It is lawful for the Godly to compare themselves with, and prefer themselves to others, in reference to the Lords Bounty, and Liberality toward them, when this is not done to heighten their own conceit of themselves, *Dan. 4. 30.* when nothing is attributed to their own worth as the procuring cause thereof, *Deut. 8. 17.* nor That Goodness made an occasion to despise others who possibly have not received so much, *Luke 18. 11.* But to make themselves the more Humble and Ashamed, considering that they have as far exceeded others in Ingratitude, as in Receipts, and to ingage them to excel others as far in Humble and Thankful walking afterward, as they have done in Mercies formerly bestowed: For which causes it is that *Solomon* here sets out his greatness comparatively. *I was great, and Increased more, than all that were before me in Jerusalem.* 4. The Lord may continue with men, the exercise of common Wisdom and Prudence in managing their visible Conversation before others, even when they being estranged from him, have lost the exercise of Heavenly Wisdom, and are not following the conduct thereof, and so deserve to be deprived of that other also; that he may even in that case make use of them for doing him some Service, prevent his further Dishonour by them, and manifest his Mercy by covering in part their nakedness, which would be shamefully seen, if he should (when he is provoked) withdraw even the exercise of that wit which they abuse; for this last clause of the Verse cannot but be understood so, as to relate to the time of *Solomon's* Defection, when he wanted at least in a great measure, the exercise of Spiritual Wisdom, seeing it comprehends the whole time of his prosperous condition which continued even

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under his detection, 1 Kings 10, 28. & 11. 1. &c. Even then when *He was great and Increased*, his *Wisdom remained with him*, 3. So prone are men enjoying plenty of outward Delights, to lose even the Exercise of common Prudence and Reason, and to give up themselves as Beasts to the leading of their sensual Appetites, 2 Pet. 2: 12. that it is a Mercy much to be marked and acknowledged for a man to have any measure of the exercise thereof continued in that Case, For *Solomon* speaks of this as a remarkable thing, which hardly would be expected by many, that he having *all the Delights of the Sons of Men*, being so great, and increased more than all that had been before him, might yet truly say this, *Also my Wisdom remained with me.*

Verl. 10. *And whatsoever mine Eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my Heart from any joy: for my Heart rejoiced in all my Labour, and this was my Portion of all my Labour.*
 11. *Then I looked on all the Works that my Hands had wrought, and on the Labour that I had Laboured to do: and behold, all was Vanity, and vexation of Spirit: and there was no profit under the Sun.*

Solomon goes on to describe further the frame of Spirit he had under his Estrangement from the Lord, and the Sense he had thereof, being now a Penitent. And *First* he Returns again to show how fully bent he was to pursue his sensual Pleasures, and this he holds forth in two Expressions, The one is, *That whatever his Eyes desired, he did not keep from them.* By his Eyes he means mainly the Affections of his Soul, which are usually so exprest in Scripture, especially when Lust or Desire is attributed to them, 1 Job. 2. 16. Because these take in Objects to the Affections, Job. 31: 1. And do in some sort bewray the tendency of the Affections toward these Objects, 2 Pet. 2. 14. And so the Eyes of the Body are here also comprehended; These he confesses he did not separate, or put far away from (as the Word signifies) these

these Objects to which they were of themselves strongly inclined, as he should have done; *Job. 3. 1. 1.* By the exercise of holy reason, and Grace which he had in the habit. The other expression is *That he with-held not his Heart from any joy*, Which adds to the former, that as he did not separate his Eyes, or Affections from the Objects which proved a snare to him, so he did not put a Bridle, or Restraint (as the Word translated *With-held* signifies) of the Fear of God and Thoughts of his Love upon his Affections; nor did he prohibite them, which is the chief signification of the Word, by his reason, to ingage deeply in the Love of these Delights, however lawful in themselves: Now these expressions cannot be understood as holding forth no more than the use of his lawful Liberty in enjoying his allowed Comforts, seeing the plain and literal Sense of them is so far from what is commended of that sort in other Scriptures, such as the *making a Covenant with the Eyes*, as *Job* did; and praying to turn them away from beholding *Ramity* as *David* did *Psal. 119. 37.* And so unlike to that command which doubtless had been oft prest upon *Solomon*, to *rejoyce intrembling*: Besides, if what he took had been allowed liberty, and joy of the right stamp, whereof he here speaks, he could not have past such a censure, as he doth in the following words, upon his pursuit thereof: And therefore must be understood of the sinful excess of his Affections pouring themselves out upon creature Comforts. *Secondly*, He giveth two reasons why he took this Liberty to himself, which then had been prevalent with him; but now did increase his Grief, that they should have been so: The 1. is, *That his Heart rejoyced in his Labour*, The meaning whereof is, because he found such strength of Body, and of his natural Spirit, that his very pains and toil (as the word *Labour* signifies) were pleasant to him, therefore he took this Liberty. The 2. is, *That this was his Portion*, which is not to be understood, as if God had allowed him to satisfy himself with these earthly enjoyments, without Fellowship with himself, but

that he did satisfy himself too much with the same, during the time of his distance from the Lord, as if they had been his *Portion*, which he might indeed have taken as a *Portion* sufficient to encourage him in seeking a better, *ver. 10.* *Thirdly*, He passeth Censure upon the whole, *to wit*, all his earthly enjoyments, and his Delight in them, as hath been explained, and that his censure may have the more weight, he shoves it was past, after he had turned his Face about, as the Word signifies, that is, after serious reflection, as a Penitent, both upon all the Works he had done, and upon what he intended to do, but got not accomplished: And this he doth in three Branches. 1. That he had met with nothing, but emptiness, or disappointment of any true satisfaction, which is *Vanity*. 2. That his Spirit was eaten-up, or gnawn away with the tormenting challenges of his Conscience, for pouring out his delight so much upon these things: This is the *vexation*, he speaks of. And 3. That there was *no profit* in all these things, or his Delight in them: the Original bears, he found nothing remaining over and above, that is, nothing besides disappointment and vexation. Hence we may *Learn* 1. When the Lord is not made the Prime Delight of the Souls of men, as he alone deserves to be *Cant. 2.* 3. there is nothing that can be represented to them as desirable, or pleasant, but they are ready to give up themselves to it: so that they have his restraining Grace to thank, that they are kept back from the most hainous Wickedness; for, now while Solomon is not delighting in keeping Fellowship with God, his affections are let loose, and not kept back from any thing they incline to, and his Heart is not with-held by him, from any thing he apprehended would make him joyful: And therefore he had not himself to thank, that he fell not (though his falls were very hainous) to Witchcraft and Persecution, as *Manasseh* did, seeing he speaks this truly of himself, *Whatsoever my Eyes desired, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy.* 2. A true Penitent will not only reflect with grief upon his former practices in themselves sinful, but

but likewise and mainly, upon the excess and impetuous violence of his Heart and Affections, going after things in themselves lawful, not only will he so look upon what he hath given his Heart to, and fix'd his Eyes upon; but also upon what he did not keep his Eyes, nor with-held his Heart from, though otherwayes he hath been hindered, and will mourn for the same; for, so doth Solomon regrave here, as the ground of the vexation of his heart, that *Whatever his Eyes desired, he kept not from them, nor with-held his Heart from any joy*: Though it is very probable, that there were some things his Eyes desired, that were kept from them, and some Joyes from which his Heart was with-held. 3. So strong is the baits of a mans heart estranged from God, after sensual Delights, and so assiduous and importunate Suiters of them, are his Affections, that except these things that are sinful, or may prove occasions of sin to him, be either separate from him, and so put without his reach, or the forcible restraint of Love to Christ, ~~which~~ satisfied in that case, come in upon his Heart, and sweeten it more than it can apprehend any delight beside could do, 2 Cor. 5. 14. Or the powerful apprehension of Terror from the Lord, if he should meddle with sinful pleasures, Job 31. 23. the Heart and Affections, will run forth excessively upon them; so that whoever would be kept from sin, must carefully watch against all occasions of sinning: For Solomon here regrats that he did not separate these Delights from his Eyes, and that he did not bridle his Heart from them, as the Word signifies, importing hereby what he should have done, if so be he would have kept himself free of these things, which afterward proved vexation of Spirit to him, and *Whatever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them, I with-held not my Heart from any joy*. 4. The wise Lord, who measures out to some of his Children that are dearest to him, such a bitter cup, that they have seldom, or never sensible Pleasure in what they do or enjoy in this World, and this even while they are walking with him, and far from delighting in things sinful,

Job. 21. 25. *Psal.* 88. 15. sees it fit to let others of his people, while they are pursuing things sinful, or things lawful in a sinful way, taste largely of Joy and Contentment, and have their Hearts up in their way, not because he thinks little of their Sins, But that by his Indulgence, he may hasten their Repentance, or (if they do not make this use thereof) increase the bitterness of their exercise afterward, for their further Humiliation: for, so was it with Solomon while he was giving his Heart, and Affections their own sway, in the pursuance of these Delights which afterward proved vexation to him; *I with-held not my Heart from any joy, and even then* (saith he) *my Heart rejoiced in all my Labour.* 5. So strong is the delusion of that Heart, which is left destitute, of the gracious and lively Operations of the Spirit of Christ, and is pursuing earthly delights, that even these exercises and courses for attaining its Idols, which are really painful and spending, both of Body and Spirit, will seem joyful and pleasant to it. How may this condemn them who account any pains in Christ's Service, which is true Pleasure *Prov.* 3. 17. a weariness *Mal.* 1. 13. for, Solomon sinfully pursuing earthly delights, saith, *My Heart rejoiced in all my Labour,* the Word signifies *Toil* and *Pains* even unto weariness. 6. Though men oftentimes think it a good enough Warrant to hold on in their sinful way, that their Heart prompts them so to do, and that they can take joy in their way, yet when the Lord awakes the Conscience, it will appear to be so far from a Warrant of their way, that it will increase their grief; that they should not only have followed their sinful wayes, but likewise should have had Hearts to rejoyce so much in them; for, Solomon gives this for a reason prevailing with him under his distance from the Lord, to give up himself to his earthly Pleasures, but now aggravating his guilt, and his grief, *That his Heart rejoiced in all his Labour.* 7. Although there be nothing less allowed to Believers for their Portion, than the Lord himself, his Favour and Fellowship, which alone is able to satisfy them, *Psal.* 16. 5, 6. yet when his Spirit is withdrawn from them

them, they will seek after, and satisfy themselves with the perishing delights of this earth as their portion for the time, which will exceedingly augment their grief, when the Lord reclaims them, for this other reason is a part of that which *Solomon* found now to be *vexation of Spirit* to him, that he had looked upon his earthly enjoyments, and his joy in them, as his portion; *And this* (saith he) *was my Portion of all my Labour.* 8. As men deserted of God go on in their own wayes, and never turn their face, seriously to reflect upon what they have done, so, when his Spirit whom they have grieved, is pleased to return again, they will make it their exercise, to look back upon what they have done, comparing it with the Rule, that they may find matter of Humiliation from it, for, so is it here with this penitent, *then I looked,* or (as the Word is in the Original) *I turned my face,* importing he had before this time, gone on and never looked back) *upon all the Works that my hands had wrought.* 9. When a Prodigal Child of God is come to himself, he will see and be very desirous that others should see, that every thing he hath sought after as his *Portion*, hath been empty and void of any true satisfaction, that every thing he hath poured out the delight of his Heart upon, beside the Lord, and Fellowship with him, hath but eaten up his Spirit, and left him nothing there but the gnawing worm of an accusing Conscience, so that he hath nothing of true profit remaining; nay, nothing at all, beside that disappointment and vexation: And if it be thus with men pursuing excessively pleasures in themselves lawful, how much more with these who pursue things sinful? For, this is penitent *Solomon's* Censure and Judgement past upon all his earthly Pleasures, which he calls all to consider: *Behold all is vanity and vexation of Spirit, and there is no profit under the Sun.*

Verse 12. *And I turned my self to behold Wisdom, and Madnes, and Folly, for what can the man do that cometh after the King? Even that which hath been already done.*

THis Penitent Preacher having with Grief related and censured the principal courses which he followed, during his distance from the Lord, for attaining to Happiness, Namely, the contemplation, and study of all created things, and the plentiful injoyment of creature Comforts, He doth now compare both together, and shows first how serious he was in so doing, he turned his face from other things to contemplate Wisdom, whereby is meant mainly the knowledge of things Natural and Moral, or whatever mans wit, without the special conduct of the Lords Spirit, can find out for attaining to Happiness, And Madnes and Folly, by which he means all these sensual Delights formerly mentioned, wherein men place their Happiness, As he had looked upon both apart, so now he considers both joyntly, and cannot pass from his former Sentence of both. And next, because he did foresee that many Inferior to him, would presume to find Happiness where he had been disappointed, therefore he put this question to them, *What can the Man do that cometh after the King?* Which hath the force of a denial (as appears by the answer here subjoynd) viz. That no man after Solomon himself should ever be able to do any thing to lead him nearer an earthly Felicity, by trying the like courses, than he had done: And the ground of this is supposed, that none can expect to have more advantages, and helps to make them profit in such a study, and successful in such an attempt; And this is both a Reason of his painful study, taken from his fitness, and many advantages for it, and likewise an Argument to make his Judgment and Censure past upon such courses, have the more weight: And so to draw others from essaying to seek Happiness in the like way. Besides what was observed from some exprellions. Chap. 1, 17.
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We may learn 1. While the Heart of man is not fixed upon the Lord, and taken up with that sweetness which is to be had in his Fellowship and Service, it will be still wandering from mountain to hill, forgetting its resting place, which proves to some a just correction in displeasure for their folly, and to others a merciful exercise to make them return to their first Husband: For, Thus doth *Solomon*, beginning to be reclaimed from his defection, represent himself as one frequently turning himself about, Having said in the former verse, *He turned his face*, he saith here again, *and I turned my self to behold, &c.*

2. They that would attain to any degree of sound knowledge, and right apprehension of things, which may be profitable for themselves and others, they must not only have their Hearts diverted from other unprofitable things, and be frequent and serious in their thoughts of these that may profit, but after they have looked upon every one of them apart, they must consider them jointly, and compare one of them with another: For, here *Solomon*, that he might root this experimental knowledge in his own Heart, concerning the insufficiency of all the Creatures, humane endeavours about them, and the fullest enjoyment of them, for bringing about mans true Happiness, after he had considered all his Courses for that end apart, he turns his face again, importing his seriousness to consider them jointly, *I turned my self so behold Wisdom, and Madnes and Folly.*

3. The utmost of Comfort that Creatures can yeild, when Happiness and Contentment is sought in them, may soon be attained: It is no such depth, but that it may be sounded by these who will put it to the tryal, which yet they shall do to their great grief and vexation: One man may in a short time find out so much thereof, as that he may defy others after him to find more: Whence appears a manifest difference between Heavenly and Earthly Consolations, the Heavenly being still upon the growing hand, and incomprehensible by any of the Saints till in Heaven they be filled with all the fulness of God, *Eph. 3.*

19. 1 Cor. 2. 9. For, here Solomon at the direction of the Spirit of God professeth himself to have been at the bottom of earthly delights, so as none after him could go deeper. *What can the man do that cometh after the King?*

4. The Lord hath not only assured us by his Word, that if we seek Happiness in any thing beside himself, we shall meet with disappointment and vexation, but also hath given us experimental Testimonies thereof, under the hand of these, who to their grief have essayed it, whose Testimony we cannot in reason question, seeing we cannot rationally imagine to equal, much less to excel them in advantages for attaining to that Happiness. For here is the Testimony of one who excelled all meer men in Wisdom and many other things also, giving us, in the Lords Name, warning, that it shall be folly for us to make a new essay of finding Happiness where he was disappointed. *What can the man do that cometh after the King? even that which hath been already done.*

5. So bent are the Hearts of men naturally upon an Earthly Happiness, *Psal. 4. 6.* and so strongly concerted of their own ability to attain it. *Job 11. 12.* that though they hear the perswasion of it condemned as vain and vexatious, by these who wanted nothing to gain credit to their Testimony, yet will they still (except the Lord change their Heart) intertain hopes of attaining it, and presume to do something more for that end than any others have done before them: For this Question is to check mens vain hopes, and presumption of doing some new thing, and more effectual than what hath been done before, for attaining to Happiness in things Earthly; *What can the man do that cometh after the King? even that which hath been already done.*

6. As it is no sinful arrogance nor violation of Christian modesty, to commend our selves, when the same may commend the Truth, and is done for that end, so when it is necessary for men to speak any thing may favour of their own praise, or preference to others, they should not only be sure, that they speak

speak truly, and have a good Warrant for what they say; but
 likewise should evidence their Modesty and Humility in so do-
 ing, by keeping within the bounds they might surpasse in com-
 mending themselves: For, Solomon here, as he doth to the advan-
 tage of the Truth commend himself, so he doth, not say all that
 he might have said upon the Warrant of Gods promise to him,
 and testimony concerning him, 1 King. 3. 21. but modestly
 imports that others should find nothing more in this matter than
 he had found. *What can the man do that cometh after the King?*
even that which hath been already done. 1 Kings 3. 21. (Heb. 11. 31.)
 7. The more fit qualifications, and advantages the Lord hath
 given men, for attaining to the knowledge of the Truth, as they
 should be the more diligent in improving them, and that they
 may provoke themselves thereto, should be the more frequent in
 humble reflecting upon any thing, wherein the Lord hath made
 them to exceed others; so should the same gain the more weight
 in the minds of People to the message they carry; for, this
 question may safely be taken both for a reason, why Solomon was
 so serious in the study of the way to Happiness; and likewise
 why his Doctrine should have weight with all that hear it; *I*
turned my self to behold... *and what can the man do that cometh*
after the King? *even that which hath been already done.* 1 Kings 3. 21.
 8. It is the Lords way, who searches and knows the Hearts
 of men, to meet with the most secret motions and inclinations
 thereof, by his Word; and therefore it should be the study of all
 his Ministers so to apply his Truth, as the same may discover the
 hidden wickedness of Peoples Heart. *Isaiah 58. 10.* And so should
 it be the great desire of people to have the secrets of their Heart
 discovered to them by the Word. *1 Cor. 14. 25.* For, Solomon
 here clearly meets with that deceiving fancy of mens Hearts,
 which makes them think, that albeit he had missed Happiness
 in his way, yet possibly they might come after him, and find it
 out, while he saith; *What can the man do that cometh after the*
King? *even that which hath been already done.* 1 Kings 3. 21.

Verse 13. *Then I saw that Wisdom excelleth Folly, as far as Light excelleth Darknes.*

14. *The wise mans Eyes are in his Head, but the Fool walketh in Darknes; And I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.*

SOLomon having compared together these two principal wayes, wherein the most part of men seek to attain Happiness, and whereof Himself had tryed the outmost, and having declared them equally insufficient for that end; least he might be thought to undervalue the one (*viz.* the study of Natural Wisdom, or Moral Prudence) in all other respects, as he had done in order to its leading the Students of it to true Happiness; He doth here commend it as a good Gift of God, fit to be a handmaid to saving knowledge, and mainly as it serves for the advantage of humane Society and prefers the study of it to the other; *viz.* The voluptuous, or sensual Life, which is spent in Carnal pleasures, which he calls *Folly*, because it doth much darken mens reason, and turn them Sottish, who give up themselves to it: And this preference of the one to the other, He illustrates by the similitude of *Light*, which far *exceeds Darknes*, *vers. 13.* And proves the same by Reason, taken from the effects of both, *to wit,* That the man indued even with this common sort of *Wisdom* *hath his Eyes in his Head*: The meaning whereof is, that he is by it much enabled to foresee the hazards and advantages of his Civil Conversation, to guard himself against the one, and provide for the other, and so in some measure to walk equitably, and soberly, for the good of humane Society; while as on the contrary, the Sensual man, who hath drowned his wit in his Pleasures, is as if his Eyes were in the soles of his feet, and so he walks inconsiderately, and is ready to run into many hazards unawares, as one that is walking in the dark. Now though all that is here said to the commendation of this *Wisdom*, doth truly and far more eminently agree to saving knowledge; yet by what he spoke

of this *Wisdom*, Chap. 1. ver. 17, 18. and by what he speaks afterward of the woful effects of it in this Chapter, it doth clearly appear that he intends not a commendation of that Heavenly *Wisdom*. And having shown wherein the one of these courses doth excel the other, he comes to show in the next place, wherein they both agree; whereby he proves the vanity and weakness of that *Wisdom* (for leading man to Happiness) which he had commended before in other respects. The first thing wherein they agree, is, That the same events are common to these that are *Wise*, and to these that are *Foolish*, in the sense formerly mentioned. By events is meant (as the word signifies) the Occurrences of Providence, which fall out beyond mans foresight or expectation. And though the Word translated (*events*) be used in Scripture for Prosperous and Comfortable Occurrences, *Gen. 24. 12.* yet the following instance makes it clear, That it is to be understood here of sad and dismal events, and such as are contrary or do come against (as the Word also signifies) Mens natural Inclination. And yet the meaning is not as if every one of both sorts of men here spoken of, did alwayes meet with the same kind of sad events, seeing experience teacheth, that some sensual voluptuous Men will be kept free of such, and suffered to enjoy their Pleasures, while the morally wise and sober Man will meet with them sadly; But the meaning is that neither the foresight or prudence, wherein the one sort please themselves, as the best way to their Happiness; nor the abundance of earthly Delights, whereof the other hath no less esteem, can either hold off or sweeten any sad event that may befall either of them. And though it be true that the same sad events for the substance or kind of them, may in time befall these that are endued with saving knowledge, which do befall either of these two sorts formerly mentioned; yet to the godly the natures of these are changed, to work for their good. *Rom. 8. 28.* But to others sad events, are incident, which are not only the same for kind, but alike comfortless.

Hence

Hence *Learn* 1st Even of these Courses which natural men take for Happiness, and which are equally insufficient for bringing it about, there are some of them to be preferred to others, as having less open dishonour to God in them, serving more for the good of humane Society, and the temporary comfort of the men themselves, and keeping them in better Capacity for honouring God, if so be he shall visit them with his saving Grace, as the study of Moral Vertue and Wisdom, whereof the Lord hath some sort of liking *Mark* 10, 21. And others again to be more detested, as tending more to the public dishonour of God, *Rom.* 2, 24. quenching the remainders of natural light in men *Job.* 4, 21. and rendering them incapable of Instruction *Prov.* 1, 12. as the excess of Carnal Pleasures doth, which is here called *Folly*; For, *Solomon* comparing these two together, the study of Moral Wisdom, and Sensuality, both which he had before pronounced vain, empty of satisfaction, and insufficient for making them Happy, who seek no better, he doth here prefer the one to the other. *I saw* (saith he) *that Wisdom excelleth Folly*.

2^d The comparing together of what is good and evil, better and worse, serves much for the producing of clear thoughts of both in mens minds. For, *Solomon* having shewn in the former Verse that he did joyntly consider, or compare together, *Wisdom* and *Folly*, gives account here what success he found in so doing; Namely, that he is now able to shew wherein the one excels the other, and wherein they both agree, *Then I saw that Wisdom excelleth Folly*.

3^d Whensoever we undervalue any thing, for its self good, in reference to any effect, while it is insufficient to produce, and so put it out of that place, whereunto mens ignorance or corruption had advanced it, we ought to be very careful that we do not undervalue it absolutely, and as to other uses and effects for which it may serve, but still to give it its own due in reference to these; It being manifest by experience that when any

thing

thing is deservedly cryed down in some one or other respect, many are ready to cry it down altogether, or to charge others with so doing. As for instance *Arminians*, hearing good Works undervalued in the point of Justification, they unjustly debate them in reference to the evidencing of the likelihood of our Faith and the like, which is their proper place. And the *Papists* finding us to put them from having hand in our Justification, they charge us as if we taught that they were altogether needless, all which kinds of reasoning are confuted by *Solomon* in this place, who having formerly cryed down this *Wisdom* whereof he speaks, is utterly unable to direct man to his True Happiness, he doth here commend it, as to other more inferior effects, *Then I saw that Wisdom excelleth Folly, as far as Lights, &c.*

4. The use of similitudes taken from things Natural, or Civil for clearing the truth of things Moral or Divine is lawful, and futeable for Preachers of the Gospel, providing they be applied decently, sparingly used, and not brought for proofs but illustrations of Truths proven. For so doth *Solomon* here illustrate this assertion which he proves afterward by a very pertinent similitude, *I saw that Wisdom excelleth Folly, as far as Lights excelleth Darkness*, viz. Men altogether blind in what concerns their Soul, who can neither see their spiritual danger, nor the remedy thereof, tho both be clearly held out to them, may be very sharply sighted in things belonging to this Life, and able to foresee many dangers relating thereto, that they may eschew, or prepare for them, and many advantages, that they may procure, and make use of them. For *Solomon*, commending that *Wisdom* which may be separated from saving knowledge, He saith, *The Wise mans Eyes are in his Head*.

6. Excess of sensual Pleasures, though never so lawful in themselves, doth exceedingly darken mens wits and reason, and so makes them unable to discern their hazard, or advantage Spiritual or Bodily, and consequently makes them humble and offend

offend at every thing in their way; especially at the means which are used for their reclaiming: For, it is of the voluptuous sensual man, that the wise man here speaks; *But the Fool walketh in Darkness.*

7. How far loever an unrenewed mans condition and course, may be justly preferred to anothers, whether for outward Enjoyments or inward Qualifications, such as Riches, Wisdom, and the like, yet none of them by any of these can hold off death, or any other sad stroke, nor find out any suitable consolation for themselves under the same: the consideration whereof should make them long for reconciliation and fellowship with God, and make that their study, as the only way to Happiness, in which state they shall be sure, every event shall be for their good, *Rom. 8. 28.* For, herein doth the wise man make these two courses to agree, whereof the one doth in other respects excel the other, *That one event is common to them all, viz. All of them who follow either of these courses formerly mentioned.*

8. Though unrenewed men ordinarily judge others, especially the Godly, miserable, because of sad events befalling them *Psal. 71. 11. Acts 28. 4.* yet if they did mark the Lords way with themselves, the occurrences of his Providence about them, might easily confute their mistake herein, and convince them, that neither the *Wisdom* wherein some of them Excel, nor the abundance of earthly delights, which others of them have, can exempt them from such sad events as have befallen others; for saith the wise man, *I my self also perceived that one event happeneth to them all.* *Eccl. 1. 2.* *Then said I in my heart, as it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me, and why was I then more wise? then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.*

Solomon having in the former Words asserted, that the most sly wise and sober Man is lyable to the same sad events, with the sensual voluptuous Fool, he doth here shew, first, how he applied

applied the same to himself, and after serious pondering of the Lords Dispensations with him, he found the same verified in his own person, who was inferior to none for that sort of *Wisdom*. *I said in my Heart* (saith he) *in a short time as the Fool, so it happeneth even to me*: Which is not to be understood, as if every thing had fallen out alike to him and Fools or wicked Men, for many Fools were Dethroned while he prospered, and came to the peaceable possession of their Territories; but that he did rationally, and upon good grounds judge himself lyable to the same events, some of which his moral Prudence, though very eminent could prevent, and that he had some experience of alike sad events with such toward the latter end of his life, 1 *King. 11. 14. &c.* Next he shews some of the effects which the consideration of this equality, together with the disappointment of satisfaction he found in his Study of Moral Wisdom, had upon his corrupt heart, whereof the first is here, to make him condemn that sort of Wisdom, as altogether unprofitable; and to repine at himself for taking so much pains for it, while he saith, *He said in his Heart, and why was I then more wise?* Which cannot be looked upon as spoken only in the person of others, seeing he doth so expressly set it down as the Language of his Own Heart, as he useth to do these things which are most clear to have been his own Thoughts; and considering also, that there was much of this stuff in his heart, during the time of his estrangement from the Lord, whereof he is now abashed, and content to publish it for the good of others, and therefore this must be taken for the Language of Corruption, and Temptation prevalent in his Heart. Thirdly, He passeth Censure upon this his mistaken Opinion, that this also was *Vanity*, Which cannot be applyed to Wisdom it self formerly spoken of, though it be true of it, being made use of as a sufficient guide to True Happiness, in which sense he had censured it before, but must be looked upon as a check given to his Own Heart for entertaining the forementioned Temptation, as most vain and unreason-

able, seeing there are many other good uses of that sort of Wisdom, therefore he said now in his Heart, it was a *Pannus* for him to judge it useles in other respects; though it could not exeeem men from the Dominion of Gods Providence, as the temptation did suggest.

Hence Learn 1. Whatever right Observations we make upon the Lords Dispensations with others, especially such as are sad, we ought to apply the same to our selves, by considering that the like are, or have been, or may be upon our selves, that so we may not dream of exemption from the like, nor stumble when we meet therewith: For *Solomon*, having observed in the general, That *one event happeneth to the Wise and Foolish*, He now applyeth it to himself, *Then said I in my Heart, as it happeneth to the Fool, even so it happeneth to me.*

2. The Lord in his wise Providence doth so order the falling out of the sad events upon the Children of Men, that oftentimes these who do not foresee them, nor guard against them, will be exeeemed from them; and these who are sharpest sighted to foresee, and most active to prevent them, are sadly afflicted with them: that the Wisest may learn to deny their Own Wit and Strength, and the Foolish may have time, and warning, to humble themselves for their rashness and folly: For, *Solomon* had observed, that as he himself who was a Wise man had great and long Prosperity, so might a Fool have, and as some Fools had met with sad events, so might he; For this, *I said in my Heart as it happeneth to the Fool so it happeneth to me*, Is to be understood of what according to the course of Providence in outward things might be expected, rather than of what did actually fall out to *Solomon*.

3. As the Lord for wise Reasons, to be mentioned afterward upon chap. 9. ver. 1, 2. may make the same sad events befall the Best which befall the Worst; so consequently the best while they are in their best condition here, should look upon themselves as lyable to any of these Temporary events which are incident to
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men; that they may the more soberly and thankfully possess their present Enjoyments, and be preparing for a change; for, so doth *Solomon* here teach, while he saith in his heart, and that truly, *As it happeneth to the Fool, even so it happeneth to me.*

4. When the Lords Spirit is provoked to withdraw in regard of his lively operations, His train of Heavenly Thoughts goes with him, and in place thereof, Unreasonable and Sinful Cogitations come in; For, thus it was with *Solomon*, while this unreasonable suggestion was prevalent in his heart, which could not have been admitted if his heart had been kept throug (as sometimes it was) with Heavenly and profitable considerations. *I said in my heart,— and Why was I then more wise?*

5. Mans Wisdom, Natural or Acquired, in so far as it is not acted by the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, hath ordinarily fretting and repining at the Lords cross Dispensations with it; whereas the Wisdom that is from above, makes the Heart peaceable, and calm under these, *1am. 3. 17.* considering from whom, and for how good ends they come. For even *Solomon*, while the special operations of the Spirit are with-held, looks upon all that Wisdom, which is a desirable Gift of God, as useles, and repines at himself for studying of it, *And why was I then more wise?*

6. So blind are mens minds in the matters of God, without the special Illumination of Christ's Spirit; and so wedded are their Hearts to their own Will and Idols, while they are not taken up with Him, that if he make them to excel in one thing, they will readily repine if they do not excel in all, and if they attain not to what their Hearts would be at, they are ready to under value what they have received, and should be thankful for, for, so doth even *Solomon's* corruption suggest to him: Seeing he did so excel others in Wisdom, that therefore he should nor be obnoxious to the same sad events with them, And because he saw it was so with him, he is tempted to think himself a Fool in taking such pains for Wisdom, *As it happeneth to the Fool, so it happeneth even to me, and why was I then more wise?*

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7. The Lord in Wisdom, and much mercy to his Church and People, hath moved the most eminent of his Saints, to Registrate not only their own failings, that were gross and visible, but likewise some of their most secret sinfull suggestions, that others inferior to them, may take warning to watch over their hearts; and that Souls vexed with the thoughts of their own matchlesness in guilt, because of such inward sinfull suggestions as frequent their hearts, may thence have some relief and comfort: Therefore is Solomon here directed by the Spirit of God, to express his own rash and sinfull apprehensions: *Then said I in my heart— And why thus was I more wise?*

8. Whatever conflicts the Children of the Lord may have with temptations, they will at last get the victory, when his Spirit returns with his lively Operations, and then they will pass censure upon their own rashness: see Psal. 77. 10. and will be content to publish the sinfull Language of their heart, for the Glory of God, their own further humiliation, and the warning and comfort of others; For, Solomon, having said in his heart, *Why was I then more wise*, he saith, *he said in his heart again, that this also is vanity.*

Verse 16. *For there is no remembrance of the wise more then of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is, in the dayes to come shall all be forgotten; and how dieeth the wise man? as the fool.*

HE enlarges further the ground, whence these sinfull suggestions mentioned in the former verse, had the rise in his heart, namely the equality of events befalling the Morally Wise, and the Sensual Voluptuous Man, whereof he giveth here two instances, which have very useful Truths in them, though they do not bear the Conclusion which his corruption, while he was estranged from God, drew from them, to wit, The condemn-

ving themselves to be forgotten. *The first instance is* That both these sorts of men formerly mentioned, and all their enterprises for Happiness, are equally obnoxious to Oblivion: Which is not to be understood of their future and eternal state; wherein they shall be forever remembered by a sin pursuing God, for the continuance of their torment, who seek not their Happiness in Reconciliation and Fellowship with him, through Christ: But it is to be understood of their remembrance, during the time of this Life, and among men like themselves after they are gone: And is mainly intended against that sort of Wise Men who do more strongly affect the perpetuating of their Memories, and endeavour the same, by leaving behind them Monuments of their Wit, than Sensual Epicures, who care for nothing but the enjoyment of their present Pleasures: And however some of this sort of Wise men, have been, and may be long, and much remembered among men, yet with the far greatest part of them it is not so; for ordinarily others arise after them, who darken their memory and eclipse their esteem: And the remembrance of all of them, being considered as they did affect and endeavour the perpetuating of it, viz. as some piece of their chief Happiness, doth to perish quite; and at least they shall be all of them so disgraced at the last day, that they shall thenceforth eternally lose all their renown; And then this shall be fully verified of all the wicked, There shall be no remembrance of one of them more than of another, unto all Eternity. And this instance as it is verified in time, He proves by the universal forgetfulness, wherein both the Persons and Actions of the present Generation, will be buried in the future. *Seeing that which now is* (saith he) *in the days to come shall all be forgotten.* Which likewise is to be applied only to the subject matter in hand, and in the sense presently mentioned, seeing the remembrance of God and his Works will be kept up in his Church while time endures. *Isa. 45. 17.* The next instance is, that this *renewal he speaks of, shall be like the feet,* Which is held forth

in a Question, importing his admiration and indignation, (while his Heart was estranged from the Lord) that it should be so: Now this equality of these two sorts of men, the Morally wise or sober, and the Sensual fool, in reference to their Death, is not to be understood of the particular kinds of their Death, or the circumstances thereof, which use to be various in differing persons, but that all the Wisdom of the former sort, shall neither be able to prolong their Life, nor give them any more true Comfort in Death (seeing they have lived without the study of saving knowledge) than they have who never cared for such Studies, as these have been ravished with. And though this Question may be concerning the certainty and kind of Natural Death incident to the Godly Man as well as others, yet as to the quality of his Death, he doth not die as they do, for his Death is the beginning of his eternally blessed Life, and he shall live after his Death with God in everlasting remembrance. But for these wise Men, and Fools here spoken of, every one dies as another, they are at Death equally separated from their fancied Happiness, and Death is to all of them the Port and Entrance into their Eternal Torment.

Hence *Learn* 1. Though the desire of esteem among men, especially the continuance of it after death, be of it self vain, Gal. 5. 26. yet the Wisest and Best of men destitute of saving Light and Grace, do strongly incline to pursue it even as their Chief Happiness, and can with more difficulty than any others be convinced of their Vanity in so doing; For it is this sort of wise Men, that the Spirit of God here equals with the fool, and labours so much to convince of Vanity in counting themselves more truly Happy than others, because of their Wisdom, while he saith, *There is no remembrance of the Wise more then of the Fool for ever.*

2. The more wit men employ in pursuing any thing, as their Happiness beside Gods Favour, and the more earnestly they pursue the same, the more will the Lord walk contrary to them,
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and set himself to blast their courses for attaining to it, For the Spirit of God directs his Speech here mainly against these Wise men, who had much more to perpetuate their Memories by, and did more for that end, than these with whom he doth equal them: They are such whom he here certifies of that which is very vexatious to them to consider (as will appear by what Solomon saith in the following verse of himself, while he had somewhat of their temper.) *There is no remembrance of the wise more then of the fool for ever.*

3. The present Generation, and all that live in it, should look upon themselves, and all their outward Enjoyments, as not only fading, and of short continuance, but as shortly to be quite forgotten, and should apply the same consideration to themselves, and their particular Idols, in the enjoyment whereof they place their Happines, the more to wean their hearts from them, and not please themselves with general acknowledgments of the Vanity, and fading nature of all things: For the Wise man makes this general consideration a proof of that Particular, that both the *Wise* and the *Fool* shall be forgoten, *Seeing that which now is, in the dayes to come shall all be forgotten.*

4. Though temporal Death abides the Godly as well as the Wicked, *Heb. 9. 27.* yet there is a great difference, between the manner or qualities of the Death of the One, and the Other. The Death of the Godly wants the Sting, *Cor. 15. 55.* It is their perfect liberation from Sin, Death and Misery *Philip. 1. 23.* their entrance into rest, *Isa. 57. 2.* and their Coronation day, *2 Tim. 4. 8.* But the Death of the Wicked, is the day of their Execution, *Psal. 49. 14.* and of their entrance into eternal Torments, *Prov. 7. 22. 27.* For, as if it were not to be questioned but that there is a vast difference between the Death of the Godly, and the Wicked, *Solomon* here, only equals the Death of one Wicked Man, with the Death of another, while he saith, *How dies the wise man? as the fool.*

How great difference soever there may be among wicked men, for outward respects during their Life, and at their Death also for the Circumstances thereof, *2 Gen. 9. 23. 24. 25. 26. 22.* yet Death shall equal them all for the extremity of their Misery: The thoughts whereof should provoke men to make their great business now to difference themselves in some from the Wicked, by the serious study of Reconciliation with God in Christ, and living in his Fear and Obedience; for doubtless the equality of them in reference to Death, is to be looked upon as the common Port, whereby both the Wise and Fool here spoken of enter into hell, *How like the Wise Man? as the Fool.*

Verf. 17. Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the Sun, is grievous to me; For all is Vanity, and vexation of Spirit.

THis Verse contains another effect, which Solomon's disappointment of satisfaction by his Study of Natural and Moral Wisdom, and his heaping up of all earthly Delights, had upon his Heart, while it was yet destitute of that special presence of the Spirit, which sometimes he had, and the same is also the effect of his observing the equality of events, which befell the Wise and Foolish formerly mentioned: *now*, that he hated (or as the Word signifies, *Loathed and Despised*) Life. The Word translated *Life*, is Plural in the Original; Importing, that he hated all sorts or ways of living, imaginable in this World: Which is not to be understood of his hating his Natural Life, so far as to be willing to lay it down for God, when he should call for it, nor of his undervaluing of it comparatively, in respect of that better Life, which made Paul long to be dissolved, *Philip. 1. 21.* both which are commendable. But this hatred of his Life, is to be taken for some such sinful Distemper of Spirit as hath been found in some of the Saints, such as *Elija. 1. King. 19. 4. Job. 3. 3.* and *Jonah. 4. 3.* which the Lord made use of to correct and humble

humble his Spirit. And that this hatred of his Life is thus to be taken, will appear by considering the reasons which were prevalent with him for producing of it. The *First* is, That all the Works under the Sun, were grievous to him, so did the Lord embitter these things reckoned out toward the beginning of the Chapter (wherein he too much delighted), that he might bring him to Repentance; If he had not taken too much pleasure in these Works, they had not now been so grievous to him, nor would he have hated his Life: Because they were so. The *Second* which is also the cause of the former, is, That he found emptiness of Satisfaction, and nothing but a gnawing of Spirit to be the result of all these courses in order to Happiness, which he had taken during his estrangement from the Lord.

From this we may learn 1. How soon and easily the Lord who only hath dominion over the Spirits of men, can make a change upon them; and make him who lately had a pleasant Life, and rejoiced in all his Works, hate his Life, and find all his Works grievous to him: For, *Solomon*, who in the 10 ver. of this Chapter saith, *He rejoiced in all his labour*, Is now brought to say, *I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the Sun is grievous to me.*

2. So hardly are the dearest of Gods Saints reclaimed from pursuing Earthly Delights, when once they have given up themselves thereunto, that neither the voice of the Word, which *Solomon* waited not all his time, nor the voice of Conscience, together with the sweet motions and suggestions of the Spirit of God, which is vouchsafed sometimes upon the Saints under their deep Security, *Gen. 22. 12.* are sufficient to awake them, or reclaim them, until the Lord send bitterness upon their Spirits, and upon all their Idols wherein they delight, with which also the work of His Spirit must concur, *Hos. 2. 14.* For, before *Solomon* be brought to Repentance, his Life must be made bitter to him, and all the Works under the Sun *grievous*, that he may think of turning to his first Love, that he may loath to feed on Husks,

and long for Bread in his Fathers House: *I hated Life, because the work that is wrought under the Sun is grievous to me.*

3. So dangerous a thing is it, for them that have once been near God, to suffer themselves to be divorced from him, for any other Lover, that they who do so, will readily upon a very small occasion, hate that which they did most esteem, yea even their *Own Life*; For Solomon having forsaken the Lord, for base and unworthy Delights, finds them all *grievous* to him, and his *Own Life* a burden also, and this is occasioned mainly by his considering the equality of events befalling the *Wise* and the *Fool* formerly mentioned; *Therefore I hated Life, &c.*

4. As it is ordinary for the Children of the Lord, under their more moderate, and gentle exercises, to loath and weary of one sort of Life in the World, apprehending in the mean time, another desirable; and such as would give them ease, *Psal. 55. 6.* So the dearest of them may be so hardly exercised for their humbling and reclaiming, that all imaginable ways of living in this World will be hateful, and all works that can be thought upon *grievous* to them; for, the Word here translated *Life*, is in the Original in the Plural Number, and the work that is wrought indefinitely express, importing every kind of *Work* *grievous*; and every way of Living Hateful, *Therefore I hated Life, because the work that is wrought under the Sun is grievous to me.*

5. So wedded are all men naturally to their *Own Will*, and and especially men of greatest Spirits, that while Christs sanctifying Spirit is not swaying their Will to the right art, they will rather desire not to be at all, or to be in another World, though they want not their own fears that it shall not fare well with them there, than to be disappointed of what they have designed as a piece of Happiness to themselves in this World; whereof among Wicked Men *Athiopel* is an instance, and among the Godly (beside others) *Solomon* here, who now with grief relates what was the sinful frame of his Spirit (while the Lords Spirit was withdrawn) upon occasion of the disappointment of

his sinful desires, which was of it self a great Mercy to him, *I hated life* (saith he) *because the work that is done under the Sun is grievous to me.*

6. Even these who have the Seeds of saving Grace in them, and have had great familiarity with the Lord, while the special operations of his Spirit are suspended, will readily run from one extreame to another. From excess of Sinful Delight, to excess of Anxiety and Sinful Vexation; and this rather because of Disappointment of their Sinful Desires, than because of Gods being Dishonoured by them; For, thus was it with Solomon in such a case, who should have hated his sinful courses. But (saith he) *I hated Life because the work that is wrought under the Sun was grievous to me.*

7. The nearer Communion with the Lord, and the greater sweetness therein, sinners have had, and have undervalued, and the more they have been thereafter ravished with Sinful Delights, they may expect to have their Spirits the more embittered, and all their former Delights made so much the more grievous to them, before they attain to their wonted sweetness in Communion with God. See *Psal. 31. 4. Cant. 5. 7.* For, so was it with Solomon here, *who hated his Life, and found all the work wrought under the Sun grievous to him.*

8. When the Lord makes the Life of any of his People bitter to them, and other things grievous, while they are living at a distance from him, they should be so far from taking it as a token of his wrath, and purpose to destroy them, that upon the contrary, they should take it for an evidence of his preparing them for a renewed manifestation of his favour after he hath humbled them. And upon the other hand, when they find their Hearts ravished with delight in any thing under the Sun, more than with delight in God, they should take that for a clear sign of his displeasure, and should fear to be given up to rejoice in their way, till they perish. For Solomon sets down this effect which his disappointment of desired satisfaction in other things

had upon him, as that which was become a mean of his second conversion, and so spoke Love and mercy in God to him, even this, That *He hated life, because the works wrought under the sun were grievous to him.*

9. How bitter soever the lives of Gods People may be, and how grievous soever all things under the Sun may seem to them, yet the Lord still keeps them from the hight, and outmost of despaire, and doth undoubtedly make all of them Repent of any motion or interprise that way, and doth bring some of them, who have been far on toward despaire, back again to proclaime their own sin, for the warning of others, and his mercy in reclaiming them, to his praise. For, here Solomon is not left to destroy his Life, though he *hated it*, but is preserved, and reclaimed, to show how sad and sinful a case he was in, while his Conscience was awake, to tell him of his disappointment of desired satisfaction, and he as yet not restored to his wonted peace and Familiarity with God. *I hated life because all the works under the sun were grievous, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

10. While men are at a distance from the Lord, and his Spirit withdrawn from them, they will readily draw Poison from these very same considerations which have been of excellent use to them while they were near him, and had the gracious presence of his Spirit. For this makes Solomon estranged from God hate his life, that *all things are vanity and vexation of spirit*, and yet the same makes him while he is near to him, put on, and commend to others a better purpose *Eccles. 12. 13. I hated life for all is vanity.*

11. The Children of the Lord will not weary to view often these Truths, whereof they have found the benefit or comfort in their own experience, nor will it be grievous to them to speak again and again of them, see *Philip. 3. 1.* knowing that they may yet prove profitable or comfortable to themselves and others. For which cause it is that Solomon repeats here, what he hath often asserted before, only here he brings it in as a ground

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formerly mistaken by him, whereupon he hated his life, and so makes use of it now to increase his Humiliation, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Verſe 18. *Yea I hated all my labour, which I had taken under the Sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.*

19. *And who knows whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour, wherein I have laboured; and wherein I have shewed my self wise under the Sun. This is also vanity.*

THeſe words contain *Fiſt*: The third effect of Solomons diſ-
appointment of his deſired ſatisfaction by all his Courſes,
during his eſtrangement from the Lord, and that is, The ha-
red of all his labour; which is not to be underſtood of that
Holy Indignation 2 Cor. 7. 11. which no doubt Solomon now
being a penitent had, at the ſinfulneſs of his former ways, ſee-
ing this hatred flowed from ſuch grounds as are here expreſſed,
and is Censured by him as Vanity; Nor is his *hating of his labour*
ſet down to condemn mens diligence in any lawful calling, which
every man ſhould love, 2 Theſſ. 3. 10. but to ſhow what a ſin-
ful frame of ſpirit he had, while he thought upon his diſap-
pointment of contentment in his earthly delights, and wanted
as yet the wonted preſence of the Lords Spirit, which he had
when he wrote this Book, and to ſhow how juſtly the Lord
corrects the Spirits of his own People with Hatred or Loathing
(as the word ſignifies) of theſe things wherein they have ſought
Contentment beſide himſelf. *Next*: There are in the Words,
the cauſes or grounds which were in his heart at that time preva-
lent to produce that ſinful Diſtemper: As 1. He conſidered that
he behoved to part with all theſe things. 2. That he behoved
to leave them to ſome other, ver. 18. 3. That it was not al-
lowed him to know whether his Heir ſhould prove Wiſe or
Fooliſh.

English. 4. That whatever he were, he should be absolute Master of all that he had. 5. He considered that he had taken exceeding much pains. And 6. That he had manifested much Prudence and Skill in conquishing and managing those great things: all which considerations did lighten this sinful Distemper, the hatred of his Labour. Whereupon *Totally*, he lets down his Censure, That all this is *Vanity*, which is not to be applyed to the necessity of mens leaving their Substance behind them at death to an Heir, unknown for his future Disposition and Carriage, seeing that is an ordinary event of Providence, but it is so be applyed to the whole case here mentioned, *to wit*, His hatred of his Labour upon such grounds as are here exprest, and to mens placing Happiness in such things, as they must leave behind them. As if he had said, this is a vain or sinful frame of Spirit, and unfuteable for a truly wise Child of God, to hate his Labour, or even his Spirit upon such a ground.

Hence Learn, 1. When men excessively love and delight in any Created thing, The Lord is thereby justly provoked to turn that Love into hatred, and indignation: and in such Wisdom and Mercy doth he so, seeing they will not take off their affections from these things, till they be made odious to them; nor will they till then place them where they should be. For Solomon who doubtless was sinfully taken up with delight in his Labour during his distance from the Lord; saith now, *Yea I hated all my labour.*

2. It is not the unworthiness of earthly Delights in comparison of Heavenly and Spiritual, which doth ordinarily at the first draw mens hearts from them, and make them have indignation at them, but rather the consideration of a necessity of parting with them, whereof the Lord in Wisdom and Mercy makes good use. *First*, to disengage mens hearts from them, because they see they must leave them, and then to move them to seek after better, and that upon more spiritual and approved grounds. For, therefore Solomon hates all his labour, because he sees he must leave it, *Yea I hated all my labour, because I should leave it.* 3.

13. While men are busily perishing their Idols, these considerations which are most common and obvious to men, will be hid from them, or not so considered by them, as to have any sutable effect upon them: For this consideration, That he should leave all to one after him, is a thing that universally none are ignorant of, and yet *Solomon* hath not thought upon it, While he was so much delighted with his Enjoyments: And therefore when he thinks seriously of it, It not otily mags his delight, but makes him hate all these things he loved before, *I hated all my labour, because I should leave it to the man that shall be after me.*

14. There is so much self-love in all men naturally, and so little love to the Glory of God, and the good of others, that if the Heart be left to its own perverseness, it would rather choice that any gift it hath formerly receiyed from God, and found sweetness and comfort in, and now misses it, should perish and go to nothing, than that others should enjoy it, or themselves have no Comfort of it: For, this even *Solomon* declares to have been a part of the ground of this sinful distemper of his spirit, *That he hated all his Labour, because (saith he) I should leave it to the man that shall be after me.*

15. Even these who have greatest insight in all sorts of Science, cannot know what their nearest Relations, their Children, Heirs, or Successors will prove: There may be fair, and promising appearance of good in some, while they are under good Education and Example, and want the free use of what they have a right unto: who may afterward prove very bad, *Eccl. 12. 12.* And in others, there may be great appearance of much Mischiefe, whom notwithstanding Gods powerful Grace may change, *Ps. 9. 1. &c.* And the Lord sees it fit to hide from men, the future disposition, and carriage of those who shall be after them, that their Children, or apparent Heirs, may be the daily remembrance of their Ignorance, and that they may be incited to the more Faithful Duty towards such, and be the more earnest with God for his direction, how to dispose of what they have to

leave behind them: For here Solomon, a very sharp-sighted man in other things, could not know, and supposes others to know no more than He, what his Heir or Successor should be; while he saith, *He shall be a wise man, who shall be after him, and who shall know whether he shall be a wise man or a fool.* Of his Great Estates lawfully Conquested and wisely managed, may fall into the hands of these who will foolishly and lawfully dispose of them: Whereupon all men should read the vanity of things earthly, and never feed themselves with fancies that what they leave, shall be wisely managed after them; which (though they were sure of it) could give them no true comfort, except they use what they have well for their own times. For, Solomon supposes here that his great Estate might fall into the hands of a fool, as indeed it fell out, for one part of it went to Rehoboam, another to Jeroboam, and a few yeass after his Death, the great part of his Treasures and Riches to Shishak, all of whom were fools in Gods sight, whatever they were in the Eyes of the World, *Who knows* (saith he) *whether he shall be a wise man or a fool.*

7. So ready is every man naturally to Idolize his own wit, that what One hath never so wisely contrived and framed, another will call to pot in a new Mould; that it may be said to be his, and he may have the praise of it. And the other who framed it wisely at first, will readily vex himself to think that what he hath shown so much wit about, should be disposed otherwise than he designed. For, here Solomon (now being a Penitent) confesseth that he had done so while he was estranged from the Lady, and so he thinketh that after his Death, another should put his wife Contrivances in a new mould; and likewise supposes his Successor (whatever he should be) ready to do the same. *I have said say I know, but I shall be after him, and who shall know whether he shall be a wise man or a fool.* Multum enim ab ipso solus est in his placere, sed in his quibus non videtur ei.

8. The clearer grounds men have that these who are to be their Heirs or Successors shall prove truly wise, and so improve what they leave to them for the honour of God, the more willingly and cheerfully should they part with what they have: And this should make these who are apparent Heirs, or in expectation to succeed to others in great possessions, so to carry themselves as they may be a Comfort, not a Vexation to these dying persons from whom they are to receive some Worldly portion: For, *Solomon* indignation at all his Labour, because he knew not whether he should be a wise man or a fool, who should enjoy the fruit of it imports that if he had known he should prove wise, he had not been so much vexed to think of leaving all to him.

9. That which doth so strictly tye the hearts of men to their earthly enjoyments, that they are vexed to think of a separation from them, Is that they look upon them as the fruit of their own pains only, and the product of their own wit, and consider not their dependence upon him who gave them all freely, and may take all back again when he will: For, *Solomon* hates his Labour when he thinks of leaving it, because he looks on it as his Labour, wherein he had taken great pains, (as the Word translated Labour signifies) and wherein he had manifested so much of his skill, *my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shown my self wise under the Sun.*

10. It is a great folly in men, to place and seek their Happiness in things they must leave behind them, and cannot carry with them through death, when they will have most need of comfort, and to neglect the seeking of it, in the study of reconciliation and fellowship with God in Christ, who would go thorow the valley of the shadow of death with them, *Psal. 23. 4.* and in his fear and obedience which will in the Gracious reward thereof follow them, and be with them after their death, when all other things will leave them, *Rev. 14. 13.* For this cause may easily be applied to men seeking their Happiness in the enjoyment of these things they must leave behind them, *this also is vanity.*

11. As it is a sinful *Vain* in men to place their Happiness, in things they must leave they know not to whom, so it is no less *Vain* to vex themselves concerning the disposal of what they have after them. If they have gotten their Possessions by unlawful means, they should Repent and Mourn for the same before the Lord, and while they enjoy them should Labour to use them aright, they should see to the education of those who are their apparent Heirs, and seek the Lords Council in declaring their last will, even concerning their outward Estates, not vexing themselves because they must leave them, and are uncertain how they shall be used after them: For, it is the whole case here, mentioned in these two Verses, viz. the hatred of his Labour, for the Reasons here express, that Solomon censures whole he saith *This also is vanity.*

Verse 20. *Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.*

21. *For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity, yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil.*

Here is 1. The fourth and last case which Solomon discompointment of desired satisfaction in his former courses, and the consideration of the former ground of hating his Labour, here repeated, had upon him, to wit, that he studied now to make his heart despair of all his Labour, which is not to be understood of so wicked a purpose, as to take away his natural life, seeing the Object of his despair is expressed here to be only the Labour he had formerly Laboured under the Sun: nor can the meaning of it be, that he did resolve to make off all pains and Labour about the affairs of this life, seeing his continued diligent in his life, even in his old age, in managing the affairs of his Kingdoms: But this is to be expounded in

reference to his scope in this book, that now, after his spirit had been so imbittered, and all his endeavours for contentment in other things beside fellowship with God frustrate, he did seriously apply himself, and resolved to go from the use of one mean to another, as is imported in this word *I went about*, as in a round or circle, as the word signifies, to persuade his own heart that Happiness was not to be found in these things, wherein he had formerly sought it, and so to cut off all hopes from his heart, of ever attaining it in these things: So that this seems to be an approved motion wrought in his heart by the Spirit of the Lord, especially considering that the Lord challenges the want of such a frame in his People under their defection from him *Isa. 57. 10. Then shalt not there be no hope*, where the same word is in the Original, which is here translated to *Despair*, *verf. 20*. Next he sets down that consideration which had influence upon the working of this frame, to wit, that he had observed that men who have most skill of contriving things worldly, most Prudence or Experience, to help them in executing their Contrivances, and likewise most Uprightness, and so are most free of Injustice or Dissimulation in reference to others, as the three words here used, *Valiant, Knowledge, and Equity* signify, Behoved to leave all their Purchase to one who never took pains, either for attaining to such things, nor would manifest such commendable Qualifications in managing and improving the same, which reason though it be not the main, that should have made his heart despair of Happiness in the Creatures, and so is imported in the word *that made him* at this time make use of it only for that end, *considering* that he had been obliged to look upon all his former courses, as insufficient to make him Happy, though he had been sure to leave all he had, to such an one as he could have desired, yet because it hath a truth in it self, and was scarce prevail with his heart, not yet so replenished with the presence of the Lord's Spirit, when he was in the frame here related, as now when he wrote this, therefore

it is blest of God to him, for working his Heart to that frame. *Thirdly*, He doth here pass Sentence, not upon his purpose to cause his Heart despair of Happiness in these things, as was explained, seeing that was an approved Resolution, but upon man laying out all his Wit and Strength upon these things, as his portion and chief Good, which he must shortly leave behind him, to such an one as he knows not what he shall prove, *Thy* (saith he) *is vanity*, i. e. a course which proves man to be vain in following of it, and which is empty of any true satisfaction to him, and it is a great evil, both of sin, in seeking Happiness where it is not, and of punishment, in so far as it disappoints, and so at last vexes and torments the Spirit.

Hence Learn 1. Men will never seek their Felicity where it may be had, *to wit*, in God, his Favour and Fellowship, till they be put out of hopes of finding it any where else: so long as they may have but *Hanks*, they will not long for the *Bread that is in their Fathers House*; For, here Solomon shows what a pass he was brought to, before he was reclaimed from pursuing earthly Delights as his Happiness, *viz*. That he was made to despair of finding what he sought in them. *Therefore I went about to cause my Heart to rest,*

2. It is no easie matter to loose the heart from earthly Delights, that is tyed to them as its portion: A man must bestir himself in the use of all means, and must busie his heart to find out motives effectual for that end; for so did Solomon here, as is imported in this expression, *I went about to cause my heart to rest,*

3. As men destitute of the special Operations of the Lords Spirit, may manifest much Skill, Prudence, Experience, Ingenuity and Uprightness in their acting, and yet be seeking but an earthly Happiness, and never minding the great end of all their Undertakings, the Glory of God, their own and others Spiritual Good: So the more of these Gifts or Virtues men do exercise and manifest in their enterprises, if they seek no further, the more will their simplicity and vanity be increased, were it but upon this ground, that they cannot dispose of all their

Purchase

Purchase to men after them; according to their own inclination and pleasure; for, *Solomon* here speaks with a main eye to himself, and his own Disposition and Carriage, while he was at a distance from the Lord, and so acting as a natural man may do, while he saith, *There is a man whose Labour is in Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Equity; and yet to a man that hath not Laboured therein, shall he leave it. This is a great evil.*

4. While these prime Motives which should prevail to alienate mens hearts from sinful courses, are either not minded, or have no Power for that effect, the Lord can, and sometimes doth make use of common and more inferior Motives for bringing about the same; and therefore every frame of Spirit is not to be looked upon as bad, because it hath been wrought by some Considerations which are common and have in them a mixture of Ignorance and Corruption; For, *Solomon* should have caused his heart to despair of Happines in the Creature, because he was created for injoying a Felicity of a higher nature, than all the Creatures could afford, and because true Happines is only to be had in Reconciliation, and Fellowship with God, but he doth not attain (at this time whereunto he here relates) to these thoughts, and yet this more inferior Consideration is blessed to bring his heart to this frame, that *There is a man whose Labour is in Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Equity, and yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave all &c.*

5. Men are naturally more prone to be anxious what shall become of their possessions after them, and afraid that they be not employed according to their mind; than they are how to improve them in their own time, for the best advantage, the honour of God, their own good, and the good of others; Which is, as if a servant should be more solicitous, how his Master should dispose of the fruits of his Labour, and afraid lest they fall into the hands of some evil servant after him; than he is how to improve his pains in the mean time to his Masters best advantage; For, *Solomon* was much troubled with this, that *man who hath laboured*

ed in wisdom---should leave all to him that hath not laboured therein Which cannot be justified, seeing the Lord cannot but dispose well of all things, into whose hand soever they fall, and how bad use soever men make of them.

6. The Lord in his wise Providence sees it fit, that great things of the World should fall for a portion to men, who have neither Wit nor Experience for purchasing, or improving of them, that all may be convinced that these things are not infallible signs of his love, *Eccles. 9. 1.* and that men who get them may be assured to their duty by them, or the more severely punished when he reckons with them *Rom. 2. 45.* For, *there is a man, whose labour is in wisdom and knowledge, and equity, and yet to a man who hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion.*

7. It is both the sin, and misery of men, to spend their time and abilities in seeking their Happiness in things which they must leave to others, not knowing how they shall be used: nothing but disappointment, vexation and torment of Conscience when God awakes it, can be the result of a mans forgetting his *one thing needful*, and Labouring, though in wisdom, and knowledge and equity for things earthly as his Happiness, which he must leave to another that hath not Laboured therein; For, this is the thing that Solomon here pronounceth *Vanity and a great evil.*

Verse 22. *For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart wherein he hath laboured under the Sun?*

23. *For all his days are sorrows, and his travel grief, yet his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.*

Solomon here giveth the Reasons of his censure past in the former words upon mens pains for an earthly Happiness.

The 1. is, that man hath no real advantage, or true comfort by all his toil of Body, and vexation of spirit about things earthly: Which is not spoken to the prejudice of any lawful diligence about humane affairs for the right end, but only to convince natural

tural

men of the fruitfulness of all their pains in order to the true satisfaction of their souls: And this reason he doth propound by way of interrogation, that he may the more effectually rouse up himself and others to consider the vanity of seeking Happiness in the creatures: and by it also he doth as it were challenge all who neglect to seek their Soul-satisfaction in Reconciliation and fellowship with God in Christ, to condescend if they can (and with all supposes that they cannot) upon any advantage they have by all their toil and pains. The question hath the force of a negative as was cleared from the like Chap. 1. ver. 3. Whence that which is here understood may be thus supplied, *what profit hath a man of all his Labour?*

The 2. Reason is, that whoever choises any earthly thing for his portion, shall be so far from any true profit, or satisfaction, that may compensate his Pains; that by the contrary *all his days shall be sorrows and his travel grief*, which is mainly to be understood of men of greatest Spirit, and Parts, who take most pains for Happiness in things earthly: not as if such men might not have many days of Carnal pleasure, and joy, but that they have no good days, no days but such as yeild them matter of sorrow, no employment but what affords them matter of grief, and such Sorrow and grief as is not easily exprest, therefore he useth several words here to the same purpose, and these in the abstract and in the plural Number.

The 3. Reason, which may be taken for an instance, or illustration of the former, is, that even in the time which God hath appointed for the rest of mens Bodies and Spirits, such men are often so lost in the pursuit of their Idols, of Riches, Honour, or pleasure, that they cannot get rest, or, as it is in the Original, in the night his heart lyeth not down, but is abroad and vigilant, sometimes flying from his own fears, and sometimes earnestly pursuing these shadows of earthly delights which fly swiftly from him, and this course also he censures to be Vanity, to wit, that man should so torture himself, for that which can-

cannot comfort him; especially that he should deprive himself of the rest and comfort he might have, for that which he cannot have. *This also is Vanity.*

Hence learn. 1. It is altogether impossible for any reasonable creature to condescend upon any true advantage or comfort, that men have by all their pains about things earthly as their portion, though deluded Souls ravished with delight in serving their Idols, apprehend that real comfort and gain is only to be had in their way *Hosea. 12. 18.* yet cannot the wisest of them get account of any such thing as deserves that name. For, this is question which no man seeking his Happiness in the creatures can answer Affirmatively, by shewing what he hath beside toil, and vexation, *what hath a man of all his Labour; and the vexation of his heart.*

2. Men that would promote the work of Mortification in their own hearts, must often put their hearts to consider what profit or comfort they have, as the result of so great pains as they have taken about their Idols; And have need also to have their Consciences often prest by Christs Ministers to make answer to this or the like question, which Solomon having put in substance before *Chap. 1. 3.* he puts here again to his own heart, and to others also, *what hath a man of all his labour? &c.*

3. So earnest are men, who make not the Lord, his favour and fellowship their chief delight, in the pursuit of their Idol, that they not only spend their bodies with toil, and wearisome business, as the word here translated *Labour* signifies, but they suffer their Spirits also to be eaten up, or gnawn away with care and fears about their Idols, as the word *Vexation* signifies; Thus doth the Lord justly correct men for slighting of him, by suffering them to render themselves in some measure incapable, of that sweetness they so much thirst after in things beside him. How much better were it for them to bestow their pains in seeking and serving the Lord, *whose way is pleasantness. Prov. 3. 21. 22. Psal. 101. 5.* and strength *Prov. 10. 29.* to all them that walk there-
in.

Verse 24. *There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink; and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his Labour: This is the fate, what it was from the hand of God.*

25. *For what can he do? or who shall he hasten to, when he shall die?*

Least the Preachers former Doctrine concerning the Vanity of things Earthly in order to the satisfying of a mans Soul, might be mistaken, as if the intent thereof were to deprive men of the comfortable use of Gods good Creatures, before he prosecute it further he doth here open up a little, the nature of that wherein true Happiness doth consist, which he doth more fully clear afterward: And so in few words clearly determines what is that good for the Sons of Men in this Life, which he said he was so inquisitive about, in the *third* verse of this chapter. And this he doth in such a way, as may be most prevalent with men ravished with earthly delights: And for this end he doth *First* show, that that Happiness which is attainable in this World, consists in the conjunction of these two, The 1. relating to the outward man, is the Holy, Sober, and Cheerful use of all lawful creature Comforts, which the Scripture comprehends under the Name of *our daily Bread*, and he calls *Eating and Drinking*; for, thus must the Eating and Drinking here commended be understood, and not of a mans giving up himself to the excessive use of sensual Delights, considering that Solomon hath so much condemned this before, as unworthy to be chosen for a mans portion, and that the same is altogether inconsistent with the good of the Soul. The 2. relating to the Inner-Man, to which the former must be subservient is, that he *make his Soul enjoy good*, which must be understood of some good suitable, and satisfactory to the Soul, as no sensual Delight can be: And therefore it must be that sweet Fellowship which reconciled Souls have with the Lord, while they walk in his Fear and Obedience, which

which he professes in the close of this Book, and this is to be intended by man as the good of all his Labour, or pain he takes in this World, the end of his Eating, Drinking, and using all the lawful comforts of this life. *Next*, He doth confirm that this Good consists in the conjunction of these two, from his own certain knowledge and experience; *As first*, viz. by the light of the Word, and the Spirit of God now present with him, and by his own observation, that *all this*, to wit, all lawful creature comforts, the power to make use of them, and find sweetness in them, and especially the Grace to use them so as the Souls good may be thereby promoted, *All this was from the hand of God*: whereby is meant his liberality enlarged towards man, in allowing these Comforts upon him, and his powerful Blessing causing him so to use them, see *Psal.* 104. 28. And *Thirdly*, to gain weight to his testimony concerning this matter, he shows he was inferior to none for plenty of creature Comforts, and opportunity to make use of them speedily, without much labour to him, and therefore was to be believed in this, That Happiness was not in the enjoyment of outward Comforts alone, but only in such a Holy and Cheerful use of them, as might be subservient to the Souls good, which consists in Fellowship with the Lord.

Hence Learn it: Though the publick Ministers of Christ sought to deliver the whole Counsel of God to the People, as they have ability and opportunity, *Ag.* 20. 20, 27. Yet is it Wisdom in them while they have to do with these that are strangers to Communion with the Lord, especially such of these as are ravished with Earthly Delights, to bring forth in the first place such Truths as may probably be most taking, prevalent, and have best acceptance with them, such as these are that do concern the Lords large allowance of as much comfort, even in outward things, as men can in reason desire: That Soul-ravishing sweetness is only to be found in Spiritual Exercises, which will make all sinful Delights loathsome, and refine the lawful Sweetness that is in the Elements; And so that Religion is a friend both to the Bodies

and Spirits of men: For, which is Solomon's method here, who without doubt, is directed to frame this Book mainly, for the convincing and gaining of Men, who are in the way that he himself was in, before his recovery from his defection. He doth not at the first deliver the strictest of these Precepts, which afterward he presseth in order to Happiness; but speaks as if he conceded much to men concerning the use of sensual Delights, only reminding them of their Souls good, which they could not in reason slight, while he saith, *There is nothing better for a man, then that he should Eat and Drink, and make his Soul enjoy good of his Labour* to have his most inward desires, *as a man should* satisfied.

2. It is dangerous to leave men under Convictions of the evil of their Courses, and Apprehensions of certain misery abiding them, except there be also some intimation of a probable way for them to be made Happy, and the same in some measure cleared up to them; least they either return to their wonted sensual Delights, and *shall* would have gone back to Egypt, or choice to die in Despair, not daring to go back, and not knowing how to go forward. Therefore Solomon having spoken somewhat concerning the Insufficiency of the most plausible and promising courses, which notwithstanding of the Lions Spirit can take for satisfaction, before he pressed further he inserts here some discovery of true Happiness, that men may have the clearer thoughts of it, while he saith, *There is nothing better for a man then that he should Eat and Drink, and make his Soul enjoy good of his Labour.*

3. As it is to be acknowledged for a great Blessing of God to have plenty of Creature Comforts, and withall Power to make use of them, and feel Sweetness in them, and not to be hindered therein either by inward exercise of Spirit, *Job 32. 19. 20.* such as the Lords withdrawing of his wonted comfortable Presence, *Psal. 103. 19. and 42. 3.* by outward Crosses imbittering the Spirit, *1 Sam. 30. 26. 27.* by excessive fears of outward Hazards, *Psal. 117. 28.* by groundless scruples of Conscience, *Mat. 23. 14.* or by miserable Spemings, &c. So it is to be looked upon, but

Souls injoying of that true Spiritual good, which is fultable soine when we are by the use of these things; led to think upon and long for better, and when the strength we receive thereby is imployed in the Praise and Service of the Lord; for this Eating and Drinking here commended; carries along with it, and promotes, the Souls injoying of Good, and if man *Eat and Drink*, and neglect to *make his Soul enjoy good*; he is worse than the Beasts that perish. *There is nothing better then to Eat and Drink, and make the Soul enjoy Good.*

7. Though the Soul and the matters of it, should be first, and principally cared for *Mat. 6, 33.* yet it is not the Lords mind; that our seeking the good of our Souls should make us careless of our Bodies, but rather that we should out of respect to our Souls, and the good thereof, respect the good of our Bodies in a Sober and Holy manner: So that to respect the Body and care for it, in reference to the Soul, that by the Body the Soul may be served in serving its Creator: and not to neglect the Soul, or any Duty relating to the welfare thereof, for indulgence to the Body, is that *golden path*, wherein men may expect some measure of that Happiness which the Lord allows upon his Children in this Life; for (saith he) *There is nothing better then that a man should Eat and Drink, and enjoy good of his Labour.*

8. Every expression in the Scriptures, is not to be looked upon apart; but some are to be considered jointly with others, sometimes with such as go before, sometimes with such as follow after, else men will be in hazard to wrest the Scripture to their own Destruction: For if we consider the first expression in this verse, *There is nothing better then that a man should Eat and Drink*, without considering what follows, it might seem to express the Sense and Mind of Epicures: But if we joyn it with the Expression immediately following of *the Souls injoying good*; then we come to understand the Eating and Drinking here commended to be such as prejudice not the Spiritual and Eternal good of mens Souls, *There is nothing better for a man, then to Eat and Drink, and make his Soul enjoy good.*

9. To have the outward Comforts of this Life, the Power to use them, and to find Sweetness in the use of them, and especially the Grace to use them aright, so as the use of them may not hinder but promote the good of the Soul; all this is from the Liberality and Providence of a good God, and in it our Fathers allowance, our Redeemers purchase, and our Comforters presence and teaching, are to be acknowledged; for, so saith Solomon here, that *All is from the Hand of God*, the Name *God* is in the plural number minding us of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

10. Whatever Ministers say to the Lords People, they should Labour to see it by the Light of the Word, and Spirit of God, and likewise by their own experience, whereby they put these Truths they deliver to the proof, and labour to find the Power of them upon their own Hearts, for (saith he) *I saw that this was from the Hand of God*.

11. Whereinsoever the Lord makes any of his Servants to excel for outward Injoyments or Priviledges, they should Labour so to carry themselves in the use thereof, that from their own experience, they may teach others how to use these outward Advantages for the Spiritual good of their Souls, considering that People who place their Happiness in these things, are ready to think, that if men knew Experimentally the worth and sweetness which they fancy to be in them, they would not so undervalue them. For, that Solomon may convince all, that there is no true Happiness in the use of these things, except they be made subservient to the Souls enjoying of that true good, which is in Fellowship with God, he doth by this question incite all to consider, that he who asserts this Truth was inferior to none for plenty of outward Comforts, and conveniency of speedy injoyment of them, while he saith, *Who can Eat? or who can have pleasure more than I?*

Verse 26. For God giveth to a man that is good in his fight, *Wisdom, and Knowledge and Joy*; but to the Sinner he giveth *travail, to gather and to heap up*, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity, and vexation of Spirit.

HAVING given a short sum of that True Happiness which is attainable in this Life, he doth here describe the Blessedness of them that seek after it, and the misery of these that slight it: And this he brings in as a reason to move men to fall in love with it. As for the man that takes the right way of seeking Happiness, whom here he calls *the man that is good in Gods fight*, which signifies one freely favoured and delighted in, and so a justified person through the Righteousness of Christ, and one who is sincerely studying what is good, and well-pleasing, not in the sight of the World, but of God; The Lord *giveth*, and giveth freely, and in giving makes sure and firm to him, as the word signifies, *Wisdom and Knowledge and Joy*. Whereby is meant not only skill to purchase a Competency of things Worldly, with Prudence to manage, and use the same aright, together with cheerfulness in the use thereof, which cannot be excluded here, seeing the same was expressed before as subservient to that Happiness which is attainable in this World; But mainly an increase of saving knowledge, which is set forth by two words, because there are many degrees of it, and an increase of Spiritual joy flowing from the Faith of Acceptation with God through Jesus Christ: I say, the words are to be understood of the increase of these things, because they are promised to the man who is before favoured, and so hath the first Grace. Next, As for the man who continues in his mistake concerning the way to true Happiness, whom he calls here *the sinner*, not as if the other formerly spoken of, or any other in the World, did not deserve that name; but because such an one is given up to the slavery and

servitude of his lusts, in an unreconciled state (as the Word *Sinner* often signifies in Scripture, when it is opposed to the *Good or Righteous*. 1 Pet. 4. 18) and, as the Original Word here signifies, *One that errs from the Scope*. i. e. who is mistaken in the Main concerning True Happiness, & is pursuing the same in things of this Earth, To such an One God giveth in His justice and displeasure, as his sure portion, if he continue in that way, *fore travel*, or (as the word signifies) Painful Servitude and slavery in *gathering and heaping* (which Words import him to be both successful and unsatisfied) that which he must leave behind him, to be possessed by these for whom he intended least, even to one that is good in Gods sight: Which is not to be understood, as if every Wicked man should make some Godly man his Heir; for then the Godly should be the Richest in the World; but that often the Fruit of the wickeds pains redounds to the advantage of the Godly, or rather that his purchase and estate is at the Lords disposal, to give to whom he pleases, and thinks good enough for receiving such trifles. And this excessive pains of men, for these things which they can neither long enjoy, nor transfer to others as they please, he censures as *Vanity*, that is, a sinful course, and such as will in the end produce nothing but torment to mens Spirits.

Hence Learn. 1. The consideration of the Lords large and comfortable allowance to His Own, should move All to take them to His Way of seeking after Happiness, and therefore this allowance should be much insisted on by his servants, and often viewed by People, that their hearts may be engaged to that way: For this description of the Lords liberality, and sweet allowance to his own, is here brought in as a motive to make men fall in love with that Way to Happiness formerly hinted at. *For God gives to a man that is good in his sight, Wisdom and knowledge and joy.*

2. Before a man can expect that large and sweet allowance which God giveth to his Children, he must first be made good

in Gods sight, by Reconciliation with Him, the Impuration of Christs Righteousness, and Renovation of his Nature, that he may aime at what is well pleasing in the sight of God; For, *to the man that is good in his sight he giveth Wisdom &c.*

3. Whatever the best of men receive from God, even these who are accepted as Righteous in his sight, whose dispositions and way is most sincere, and so are *Good in his sight*, it is not of their procurement, nor merited by any goodness they have, seeing it is all a free Gift: For even *to him that is good in his sight he giveth Wisdom*; every further degree of Grace is a new gift to such a man.

4. Not only Knowledge of things Spiritual, but of managing aright things Temporal; and not only the first saving Grace, which comprehends the habits of all Graces, but every act of Grace; and not only matter of comfort and joy, but joy it self, or the power and heart to take joy and comfort, is a free gift of God: For, this, he giveth to him that is good in his sight *Wisdom and Knowledge and joy*, may be understood of all sorts of approven Wisdom, of every degree of Knowledge and Grace, and of his giving the power to take comfort in known grounds of rejoycing.

5. That which men weary themselves in seeking after, and will never find in things Earthly, is truly to be found in God: For, Solomon hath shown before that during his estrangement from God, he was seeking satisfaction to his mind in the study of *Wisdom*, and thereafter in the abundance of earthly pleasures, and hath declared himself disappointed of all, till he come back to his first Love, who giveth him, as He here professes, and promises to others who will take them to Gods way that they shall get the like, *Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Joy.*

6. There must be *Wisdom and Knowledge*, before there be true comfort: Men must see their misery and hazard, the remedie thereof, and how to make use of it; Their duty and how to set about it; and then they may be sure Joy shall be the result

result of this practical heart affecting Knowledge, whereof Solomon here speaks: This is imported in the order of these gifts, *He giveth Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Joy.*

7. The blessedness of Gods People, and the misery of others are both better seen, when they are compared together. Therefore the Preacher here illustrates the one by the other. *God giveth to the man that is good in his sight, Wisdom and Knowledge, and Joy; But to the sinner travel, &c.*

8. Though men seeking their Happiness in other things beside the Lord, do imagine themselves the only free men, and to have much Joy in their way; yet the truth is, they are but slaves to Satan, and their own Lusts, and without all true comfort, for (saith he) *God giveth to the sinner travel*, the Word signifies *Servitude and Affliction.*

9. Though men seeking Happiness in things Earthly, may have success in getting abundance of them brought to their hand, as is imported in this that *Thy gather and heap up*, yet they are still as far from satisfaction as formerly; For these two words import them still Gathering and Heaping up, and yet never attaining to what contents them, *They have travel to gather and heap up.*

10. God hath the absolute disposal of mens Purchase and Estates at His Pleasure, He can order them to be violently taken away from them, *Isa. 54. 16.* He can determine their minds at last, to order them otherwise than they did formerly intend, *Prov. 28. 8.* And can remove these for whom they did intend them, that they may fall into the hands of others, *Psal. 39. 6.* It is good to serve such a Master who can and will (when he pleases) transfer the Estates of his enemies to his Friends, *Psal. 105. 44.* And doth alwise dispose of the same as he thinks good, *That he may give to him that is good before him.*

11. The consideration of the much toil that is in purchasing things worldly, the great disappointment of true satisfaction which is in the enjoying of them, and the much torment of

Spirit which is the result of seeking Happiness in them, should wean mens hearts from them; For, so is this course of Travelling to gather and heap up, that which these who are good before God shall enjoy, here censured, while he saith, *This also is vanity and vexation of Spirit.*

CHAP. III.

The ARGUMENT.

THE Wise man in this Chapter, that he may bring up the hearts of these, who in Gods way are upon a search after True Happiness, to a submission unto, and contentment with the changes that may be in their Lot, and draw them off from seeking Happiness in Earthly delights. As also to instruct them in observing the right time of all their actions, affordeth for these ends so many convincing considerations or Arguments. As, 1. That the time of All events (whether mediat, caried on by the voluntary actions of men, or immediat that fall out in Gods holy Providence) is in Gods hand, ver. 1. which is amplified and instanced in fourteen couple of distinct Events, which most ordinarily fall out, ver. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. all which are linked together in pairs as deserving a joins consideration. 2. That there is no true profit in that vexing and wearisome pains which a man takes to make up to himself a Happiness in earthly things: ver. 9. 3. That God hath inevitably imposed upon all the sons of men this fore travel to wrestle shorow many vicissitudes in their Lot, ver. 10. 4. That the Lords design in all these changes is, that men may be suitably exercised with Humility, Submission, Mortification and Thanksgiving under them, ver. 10. 5. That God hath made every thing (both grievous and joyful) beautiful in its season. Though most mens hearts be so plagued, that they cannot discern the mind of God therein, ver. 11. 6. That the highest profit of the most beautiful and favourable dispensations of God to man, is to quicken him to the duties of spiritual joy, diligence in Holiness, and the cheerful and sober use of the Creatures, which right improvement, as it is the true good of Gods dispensations in this life, and best portion and fruits be

own reap by them, so is it a singular gift of God, ver. 12. 13. 7. That all the Lords dispensations as to his purposed effects, ends, and Timing of them, are permanent and unchangeable, and therefore are to be acquiesced in and submitted to, ver. 34. 8. That all Gods Works, upon supposition of his decrees, and in respect of men whose wit and power is but short, and on consideration of their holy ends, are absolutely perfect and compleat; and so not to be murmured against, ver. 14. 9. That men being so absolutely at Gods disposal ought to exercise himself with a holy and Reverential fear before him, under all the turnings of Providence in his Condition, and thereby attain to True Contentment with it, ver. 14. 10. That the saddest Dispensations the Lords People are, or can be under, are no other for substance, efficient cause, and holy ends, than the Saints have formerly been exercised with; whatever difference there may be in regard of some circumstances and instruments, ver. 15. 11. That God in due time will inquire after, and in his own way avenge the injuries done to his oppressed and persecuted People, which may contribute much to quiet their hearts under their saddest troubles, ver. 15. 12. That however the Saints at times get not fair justice from men in place and power upon earth, yet there is a set and fixed time wherein God will pass righteous judgement, absolving, and rewarding the Righteous, and condemning and avenging upon the Wicked the wrongs done to His People, and reversing their unjust sentences against them, ver. 16. 17. 13. That Gods holy purpose and end in permitting Wicked men to have that power, and trust in the world, which they abuse to injustice and persecution of the Godly is, That they may be discovered both to themselves and others to be that which they were not known to be while they wanted fit opportunities to show their Wickedness; And that they themselves may see how nearly as to their disposition and carriage, especially their praying upon the Poor, they do resemble the very beasts of the field, ver. 18. And to convince such unjust and oppressing Rulers of their Brutishness, Solomon doth illustrate and amplify the resemblance between Them and Beasts, in regard that the like accidents and occurrences so interrupt their Works of injustice, and deprive them of the delights they have in Earthly things: do befall them with the Beasts, ver. 19. That they are both equally Subject to death, having one and the same Vital breath or Animal life, in regard of which they have not preeminence above the Beasts, which he further confirms by a general assertion of the Vanity of all created things, ver. 19. And that they and the beasts also, are all in a motion and tendency the same way, to wit, toward Corruption and the state of the Dead; Both man as to his Body, and the Beast being of the same metall and matter, even the dust, and so both must be dissolved into dust again, ver. 20. And 14. That though equality, oppression and sensuality in men doth make them much to resemble Beasts, yet in regard of the better part, the Immortal Soul, they have the preeminence of the Beasts, which duly considered may divert them from seeking Happiness in things common to them with Beasts, and move them to submit to any condition of life that may be subservient to the good of the Immortal Spirit.

ver. 21. And then from all these considerations the Wise man draws a certain Conclusion, That the highest Happiness attainable in this Life, is a chearfull and ready following of the Duties of Piety toward God, and Righteousness toward Men, even under all the vicissitudes of a mans Lot: This being the best Portion he is capable to enjoy within time: And seeing he must once Leave, and not return a gain (after Death) to the beholding or enjoying of these outward things, It is therefore His Wisdom to improve all his outward comforts as encouragements to a willing and chearful obedience to God, ver. 22. From all which it is evident that a man is not to seek or expect True Felicity in any outward enjoyments, But in the favour of God through Christ Jesus, and following of his Duty in obedience to the Command of God; And in a subserviency to this, is obliged to study a silent and conscientious submission unto, and contentment with, all the times and various providences, that pass over him in the World.

CHAP. III.

Verse 1. *To every thing there is a Season, and a time to every purpose, under the Heaven.*

THis verse contains the first consideration, serving to quiet the Hearts of the Godly, especially against the many sad changes that are in this World, to wear their hearts from seeking Happiness in things Earthly: As also to move all to observe the fittest opportunity of their Actions and purposes, and to depend upon Him who hath the times in his power: The sum whereof is, That every event (whether it fall out in humane and voluntary Actions, which seem to be most in mans own power, or in the daily working of Gods Providence, both which are here to be understood, not only because of the largeness of the expression *To every thing there is a season*, But mainly because the following instances respect both) hath a season, the Word signifies, *A fixed, appointed or foredetermined Time*; and is so translated *Esh. 9. 27. Ex. 10. 14.* And this fixing of the season of every thing, is to be understood in reference to Gods eternal decree forordaining

daining all Events, as is clear by comparing this with *ver. 21.* where he saith God hath made every thing beautiful in his season: This same consideration he doth in another expression apply to mens purposes, or resolutions, especially such as men have complacency and delight in, as the Word translated *Purpose* signifies. See *Gen. 34. 19.* Even for these there is a Time, the Word also signifies a *set time* *Neh. 2. 6.* out of which men cannot so much as conceive or resolve the doing of any thing, much less act it: The Words also may be looked upon as pointing at mans Duty to observe a fit time and season in all his Actings.

Hence Learn. 1. Though future Events, the time whereof cannot be known in their natural causes, be wholly uncertain to us *Prov. 27. 1.* Yet are they all clearly foreseen, and certainly foreappointed, and that from Eternity *Act. 15, 18.* by the infinitely wise Lord, so that they cannot fall out sooner or later, than in the time that he hath appointed for them; for in reference to his Eternal Counsel mainly is this to be understood *To every thing there is a season.*

2. Mans will is not an Independent thing: man is not absolute Master of his purposes, nor doth the Lord look through the prospect of mans Free Will to see that will fall out according as it shall of it self incline; But he in his Eternal Council hath wisely ordered all the motions thereof, for, *There is a time for every purpose.* The Word signifies (Volition) or the very act of the Will, and may be understood of humane purposes, as several of the following instances must also be understood.

3. Though there be no season or time allowed for sinful Actions or purposes, since negative precepts oblige in every article of time; yet wicked men can neither act wickedness, nor purpose it, but in the time wherein God hath resolved to permit the same, withdrawing his Grace, which he is not bound to give, for even of wicked mens Actings, such as their persecution of the Godly, and their wicked Plots and purposes,

may this be understood; *There is a season for every thing, and a time for every purpose.*

4. Every Duty is not to be gone about at every Season, but the due opportunity thereof to be carefully searched for; by considering the general Rules of the Word; especially what Duties such Dispensations call for. *Jam. 5. 13.* by praying for the Lords teaching to know the Times *1 Chron. 12. 32.* and laying to heart the sad challenge given to those that are ignorant thereof *Jer. 8. 7.* For, in reference to the Duty of man that would enjoy that True Happiness which he pointed out before, as some of the following instances make clear; this consideration may be taken; as a direction to them to observe the Season. *To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose.*

5. It serveth much for quieting the hearts of the Godly under all the sad changes of Dispensation that are in the World, to consider that all these fall out in the Times and Seasons set and fixed for them in Gods Eternal Counsel; who minded the welfare of His Own from all Eternity; *Jer. 31. 3.* And is engaged to bring their good out of the worst that can fall out in time, *Rom. 8. 28.* And particularly to believe that enemies cannot so much as Plot, much less raise up Trouble or Persecution against them, but at the time wherein he hath foreseen it. It to Exercise them therewith *1 Pet. 4. 17.* Nor can their Trials continue longer than His set time for expressing His favour against in their delivery is come *Psal. 102. 13.* For, this according to the scope of the Book cannot but be taken for a consideration serving to hold off vexation from the hearts of the Godly, and keep them in the cheerful possession of their spiritual Happiness; that, *To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven.*

6. This same consideration, that God hath fixed a time for all things and purposes; may serve to wean mens hearts from seeking Happiness in any thing beside himself; seeing he hath

in his hand the Time of their coming to enjoy theſe things, the continuance and the removal of them, beſide that they can have but for a Season the enjoyment of any thing beneath the Sun; For, this according to the Preachers Scope, may be alſo looked upon, as a conſideration to wean the hearts of men from ſeeking Happineſs in things below; *To every thing there is a ſeaſon, and a time for every purpoſe under heaven.*

7. Gods providence reacheth not only to all Events and purpoſes within the Church, where it is in a moſt ſpecial way exerciſed *Pſal. 76. 1.* but to all the corners of the Earth, and to Hell alſo; Neither Men, nor Devils, Heathens, or Infidels, can act or plot againſt Him, or his bleſſed People, but at the Season and Times, wherein it ſhall prove fitteſt for His Glory, and the good of His Own: For, *To every thing there is a ſeaſon, and a time to every purpoſe under heaven.*

8. One and the ſame Truth may have ſeveral Uſes drawn from it; For, as this that there is a Season and Time for every thing fore-appointed by God, ſerves to quiet the hearts of the Godly, and make them careful to obſerve the Time; ſo as it imports many changes in Time; It ſerves to wean mens hearts from things Earthlie, which can be enjoyed but for a Time.

Verſe 2. *A time to be born, and a time to dy: a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.*

In this and the following Verſes, the Preacher giveth many particular inſtances, wherein the Truth of the former Aſſertion of the Lords fixing of the Time and Season of every Event under the Sun, is mainly to be conſidered, and made uſe of; And however ſome of theſe inſtances have a Truth in them in reference to mans Duty, that there is a fit Season for him to do ſuch and ſuch things in, which he ought to obſerve and make uſe of; as is clear by inſtances of Mourning and Rejoycing, Silence, and Speech; Yet all of them are mainly, and the moſt part of them only, to be underſtood, in reference to the

the Lords fixing of the time of their being, and consequently the manner thereof: Nor are these instances to be taken for a full enumeration, as if every thing, the time whereof is fixed by the Lord, were here reckoned out, and no other thing but what is here particularly named were to be looked upon, as having its Time and Season fixed; But the purpose spoken of, is to be understood of these and such like, which clause is to be understood after them all, seeing it is else where exprest in Scripture after such Enumerations. *Gal. 5. 21.* Only these are to be looked upon as the prime Dispensations of God in the World, and mainly useful to be considered, as they are timed, and ordered by His Providence; and being so considered, are fit to work the Hearts of the Godly to Contentment under all changes, and to wean the hearts of all from seeking Happiness in this life, where such variety of changes are; And they are put in pairs, as deserving a joint consideration, that when the one is called to mind, the other, which is in some sort contrary to it, may also come to mind:

The first Pair concerning the time of Birth and Death, is literally to be understood. That the very minut of every ones entry into this World, whether it be timely or abortive; and likewise of their departure out of it by Death, whether natural, or violent is from Eternity fixed, and cannot fall out sooner or later than God hath appointed. The other, concerning the Times of *Planting* and *plucking up*, though they have in them a Truth in reference to mans Duty, who ought to observe the time of such actions as may be held out under these expressions whether properly or metaphorically taken; yet they are mainly to be understood of Gods Dispensation about Man along his life, between his Birth and Death, and particularly of his Planting and setting Nations and Churches and particular mens interests therein, which are pointed at in the following Instances, and his overturning the same again, when he sees fit and that because the Scripture doth frequently exprest these

par-

particular Dispensations of Providence; in the very same Terms that are here, both in Threatnings Jer. 45. 4. and Promises Jer. 24. 6. and 31. 28. and likewise because these are the Dispensations wherewith the hearts of the Godly are most disquieted, and therefore to look upon them, as Timed, and ordered wisely by the Lord serves much for quieting of them, which is the Scope.

Hence Learn 1. It is not enough for Ministers to hold out clear and sound Truths in the general, but they must also take pains to reckon out, and insist upon particular instances, wherein the Truth of what they deliver is verified, that so the Lords People by the ordinary occurrences of His Providence, and Dispensations with them, may be minded of what they have heard, and in these may see the Truth of the same: For here, this Divine Preacher, worthy to be imitate by all Ministers, being guided by the Spirit of the Lord, doth not think it enough to hold out that Truth, That there is a season and set time, for every thing and purpose. and so leave it to People to apply the same to the particular passages of Gods providence along their life; but for their help He condescends upon twenty eight particular Dispensations, the Times and Seasons whereof are set and fixed. *There is a time to be born, and a time to dy; a time to plant, &c.*

2. As their will still be variety of Changes, and a mixture of Sour and Sweet in the Lords Dispensations with the Children of men in this Life, it being proper for the other Life to be without any change or mixture, so the consideration of the better and worse thereof ought to be joined in our thoughts, and the one set against the other, that what is comfortable, may be possessed humbly, thankfully, and with preparation for a change, and what is sad may be submitted unto, since we have had sweeter, and may have hope of a change to the better again, Therefore are these pairs or couples of instances made up of sadder and sweeter Dispensations, as that which is the Lot of

men in this Life, and which ought jointly to be considered for our use. *There is a time to be born, and a time to dy, a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted.*

3. These Events which are most certain to us, as to the ordinary time of their existence, and these also, which being altogether uncertain, for the particular time of them, and are yet certainly known to fall out, are ordinarily most slighted by us, as to the consideration of the Lords timing of them, and yet would be most useful for us to consider; For here the time of Birth, which ordinarily after the Conception is certainly known; and the time of Death, which though it be unknown, is most certainly known as to the futurition of it, are first condescended upon, as things we do most readily slight, and things most useful to be considered; as they fall under the determination of Providence for the time of them, *There is a time to be born, and a time to dy;*

4. The particular time of every ones entry into the World, hath been from Eternity fixed, and condescended upon by the Lord, and the same ought to be seriously considered by all that are born of Women, both in Reference to their own Birth, and others, especially these, who are Born to them, that they may look upon all the comfortable passages of Providence, which they come to understand, as encouragements to serve the Lord, and upon all the sad passages they have met with, as these whereunto they are Born, and which therefore they should endure patiently *Job, 14. 1.* That they may be thankful to Him who preserved them or theirs in the Womb *Psal. 139, 13.* And brought them safely thence *Psal. 11. 9.* with the right proportion *Psal. 139. 15, 16.* And did not make the Womb their Grave, that these who have none Born unto them may reverence him, who gives and withholds the fruit of the Womb, as he thinks fit *Psal. 127. 3.* For such considerations of the Time of Birth, are useful to that which is *Solomons* Scope, *There is a time to be born, &c.*

5. As it is appointed for all Men once to Dy *Heb. 9. 27.* So the period of every mans Life, and consequently the manner of his Death, is fore-determined by the Lord; The consideration thereof, as it ought not to make any careless of the use of lawful means for prolonging their Life, that they may do God Service in their Generation. so it ought to be seriously minded by the Godly for guarding their hearts against the fear of Death from men, who seek their Life for their fidelity to Christ *Psal. 21. 15.* for stirring them up to live in constant expectation of Death *Job. 14. 14.* and Readiness for it *1. Cor. 15. 31.* And should make them look upon all their Earthly Enjoyments, as things from which Death will separate them, For both to work the hearts of the Godly to contentment with thier Lot, and to wean all hearts from seeking things earthly as their portion, is this, as also the rest of the Instances here given, *There is a time to dy.*

6. The Lord hath in His hand the planting of Countreys, and Kingdoms, whether formerly not inhabited, or by His Judgements waked, and depopulat, and likewise of planting Churches in these, with Faithful Ministers and Ordinances, and the Time is set wherein he will do so. The thoughts wherof, ought not to hinder mens indeavours, but to cherish their hopes, did the case seem never so desperat, and move them to follow their Duty, with dependance upon Him, who hath from Eternity fixed *a Time to plant.*

7. Though all the works of the Lord be perfect, as to the end intended by Him *Deut. 32. 4.* Yet He may for wise ends, interrupt and overturn for a time his begun work, which He doth, according as He did from Eternity resolve, and only at that time which He himself had fixed: The consideration whereof, as it may guard the hearts of His Own, against mens fury and threatnings, who cannot *pluck up what he hath planted*, till He order them to do so; So it should make them use well their enjoyments of what sort soever they be, beware

beware of these sins, which may provock Him to exercise them with so sad a Dispensation, and when He doth it, to search out and mourn for the procuring causes thereof, and not to cros His purpose manifested in that Dispensation, by seeking great things for themselves *Jer. 45. 4.* For, *There is a time to pluck up that which is planted.*

Verse 3. *A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down and a time to build up.*

Here are other Four Instances of those Dispensations of the Lord, which being considered as under the dominion of His Providence, especially for the timing of them, serve much to quiet the Hearts of the Godly, under all changes of their condition, and to wean the Hearts of all from seeking Happiness in this earth, where so many changes are, which is *Solomons* Scope here, still to be remembred and applyed to all these Instances: The first Two, may be taken in reference to mens persons; and the other to their outward Estates and enjoyments whatsoever; And so the *Killing* here spoken of, is to be understood of such sad corrections, as the Lord sees fit should be inflicted upon the bodies or Spirits of men, such as seem utterly to undoe them, And therefore are set forth by this word *Killing*, and the *Healing*, of the Lords applying medicines, or proving himself a Physician, as the Word signifies; for so doth the Scripture use the like expressions *Deut. 32. 39.* compared with *2 Kings. 5. 7.* The time of both these is in Gods hand, being from Eternity set and fixed by Him: So likewise the *Breaking down* here spoken of, is to be understood of these Breaches which the Lord makes upon mens outward Enjoyments, whether Worldly, or Spiritual; and the *Building up*, or the repairing of mens formerly broken Estates, and their recovering of them, as the like expressions in Scripture ordinarily signify *Lam. 2. 13. Isa. 58. 12, and 30. 26.* And these

these also are Dispensations in a special way to be marked, as timed, and seasoned by the Lord.

Hence Learn. 1. As the Lord is pleased sometimes to manifest His Justice against the Sons of Men, in cutting them off the Earth by violent Deaths, Now by His own more immediate Hand *Lev. 10. 2. 1 Sam. 2. 25.* And then making use of humane Justice for that effect *Est. 9. 13. &c.* And sometimes again to manifest His Mercy to His Own, By suffering them to be killed unjustly by men, and so hastening them home to Himself; *Mark 6. 19. Act. 12. 2.* So the particular time of all such sad events as these, hath been wisely resolved upon by the Lord from all Eternity, and no creature can bring them on sooner, or hold them off longer then He hath determined; None can Kill before, and none can escape the stroke after His set times comes; for in reference to the Lords fixing of the Season of such Dispensations, here signified by *Killing*, is this Instance to be understood *There is a time to kill.*

2. Sometimes the Lord is pleased to deal in such severity with the Children of men, as to their own sense their case is as desperat, as if He were killing and slaying them *Exod. 4. 24.* and to the apprehension of others, as if they were really Killed *Psal. 44. 22.* while yet He intends not to destroy, or make an end of them, but to restore them to their former condition: For this Killing may be taken both in reference to these that are Healed, and to others. *There is a time to kill, and a time to heal.*

3. Times of Healing, whether of Bleeding and sick Nations, of rent and distempered Churches, or wounded Spirits, are in Gods Hand, and till His time come, all essays of other Physicians for Healing are in vain; and therefore He is to be humbly employed, and depended upon for that end, considering that however times of Healing be fixed with Him, yet the importunity of penitents is ordinarily a comfortable fore-runner of their being healed *2 Chron. 7. 14. Hos. 6. 1.* For, with Him, *There is a time to heal.*

4. The Lord uses to manifest most of His skill about these diseases which the wisest Physicians among men would think incurable, He can not only *Heal* after wounding, but after *Killing*, by giving a better life and health than hath been taken away, especially when it is for His sake. *Mat. 10. 39. There is a time to kill, and a time to heal.*

5. The thoughts of this, that the Lord hath the Times of *Killing* and *Healing* in His hand, may bring much quietness and contentment of Spirit, under all changes of Dispensations, to these who seek their Happiness in His favour and fellowship, considering that, whatever be the power, or malice of men, they cannot *Kill* when they please, and though they should be permitted to *Kill*, he hath a time for *Healing* again; And the same may serve also to divorce mens Hearts from these things wherein they seek their Happiness beside the Lord, if they consider that He can easily *Kill* and *Destroy* all that go a Whoring from Him; For it is safe and useful to refer all these Instances which the Spirit of the Lord enumerats, to the Scope in hand, which is both to guard the Hearts of the Godly against Vexation, under sad, and terrible Dispensations, and to deterre all from excess of delight in things earthly, *There is a time to kill, and a time to heal.*

6. No mans outward Estate or Worldly Enjoyments of what sort soever they be, are so firmly settled, but the Lord can easily when He pleases, break all down; and therefore men should look upon their Buildings, whether for their Credit, Pleasure or Worldly profit, as unworthy to have their heart, seeing the Lord hath a time fixed to break them down, and the whole universe also, and should seek to have themselves Built upon the Rock, which no storme can overthrow, *There is a time to break down.*

7. The Lord hath His own time set and fixed for Building, and repairing ruined Nations and Churches *Jer. 31. 4.* As also of mens outward estates *Exod. 1. 21.* and of their inward and spiritual

spiritual Conditions Jer. 33. 7, 8. For to all these may this be applied. *There is a time to build up.*

Verse 4. *A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to mourn, and a time to dance:*

WE have here the effects of the former Dispensations, upon the Spirits, and carriage of men, the timing whereof is asserted to be in the hand of God, no less than the Dispensations themselves.

And for the understanding of these, and the time of them; it would be considered first, That this *Weeping* and *mourning* here spoken of, cannot be understood of Worldly Sorrow which causeth Death 2 Cor. 7, 10. And consequently the *Laughter* here spoken of, is not to be understood of Carnal Mirth, or the expressions thereof, which the Lord hath threatened with much woe Luk. 6, 25. Especially when His Dispensations call to Mourning *Isa. 22. 13, 14.* Nor is this *Dancing* meant of the the lascivious carriage of men at Feasts *Mark. 6. 22.* Or Idolatrous Worship. *Exod. 32. 19.* For, though the Lord, give up men to the former, as a sad punishment of their sins, *Amos 5. 16.* And leave them to the other as a fore-runner of further Judgment *Amos 6. 3.* Yet there is no time allowed in the Word of God for such things: And therefore they are mainly to be understood of moderate grief and and Godly sorrow, with the expressions thereof, suitable to the Dispensations of *Killing, breaking down* &c. formerly mentioned, and of lawful Mirth, and spiritual rejoicing, suitable to the Dispensations of *Healing, and Building up.*

Next, That the difference between the first two Instances and the last, is only (according to the force of the Words in the Original) in measure and degree, for though all of them signify the outward expression of these passions of grief and joy, yet Weeping is that which is more moderate, expressed

by sighs and tears, Mourning again, according to the signification of the Word, is that degree of grief, which hath higher expressions than the former, such as smiting of the breast, and the like. The *Laughter* here spoken of is Joy appearing in the countenance, and voice only. And *Dancing* is that which is exprest by the whole outward man.

Thirdly, That the time of these passions or affections, here spoken of, is both to be understood in reference to the Lords Dispensations, and likewise to mans Duty, and the Lords putting him to it, viz. That as the Lord hath set times wherein He giveth matter and occasion of Grief or Joy, more or less in His Dispensations, so it is Peoples Duty to observe when and in what measure, His Word, and Dispensations call them to exprest the same.

Fourthly, That however these instances be applicable, to all men, who live under such change of Dispensations, yet it is safest to apply them in special, to the Church and People of God, among whom the Dispensations formerly mentioned are mainly remarkable.

Hence Learn. 1. The Lord hath the sad and mournfull times of People set and fixed from Eternity, when He sees it fit so to work, that they shall have much matter of Mourning, and when He intends to frame their spirits for it, by suspending comfort, or by pouring out the spirit of Grace and supplication that they may be prepared for comfort here, and may long for the time when tears shall be wiped from their eyes *There is a time to weep.*

2. There are degrees of the sad conditions of the Godly, He doth not alwayes give them alike matter of Grief, nor when they have, doth He suffer their hearts to be alike weighted therewith, for the One of these Words doth exprest a higher degree of Grief, than the Other, *There is a time to weep, and a time to mourn.*

3. The World, and all the comforts of it, can neither prevent

vent nor mitigate the Mourning and Grief of People, when the Lord sees it fit to exercise them therewith: Nor can men bring it on, for all their malice and power, till the Lords sett time come, which is here spoken of, *There is a time to mourn, and a time to weep.*

4. It is the Duty of the Lords People, to observe the time, when He by His Word, and Dispensations calls them to Mourn and Weep, that they may rationally and willingly apply their hearts to that exercise, it being a high provocation of Him, and a forerunner of much woe to them, not to Mourn and Weep when he calls them to it, *Isai. 22. 12.* For this may be also understood of the time to be observed, and made use of by His people *There is a time to mourn, and a time to weep.*

5. It is sometimes necessary for the Lords people, especially when there is much terrour in His Dispensations of *killings, plucking up, and breaking down*, formerly mentioned to express their Grief so as it may appear to others, by their abstinence and chastening of their flesh *Dan. 10. 2, 3.* by their humble walking *Isai. 58. 15.* For the Words, as was cleared in the Exposition, signifie such sorrow, as breaks out in signes and expressions, so as it cannot be hid, *There is a time to weep, and a time to mourn.*

6. The Lord hath also His own times set and fixed, where-in he will fill the mouths of his People with Laughter, and turn their Mourning into Dancing, by making them see the performance of these promises which they could hardly believe *Gen. 21. 6.* Healing their spiritual distempers, *Isai. 2. 5, 6.* Guarding their hearts against the vexation of affliction, *Job, 5. 22.* giving them such clear foresights, and sweet foretastes, of their future Happiness, that they cannot but skip for joy, even in the midst of the worst that men can do to them *Luk. 6. 23.* And sometimes by giving them deliverance from their troubles *Psal. 126. 2.* And when His time for making His People Laugh and Dance cometh, the World cannot hinder it, For *There is a time to laugh and to dance.*

7. It is the Duty of the Lords People, especially when His Dispensations are eminently comfortable, to make conscience of rejoicing, and of expressing the same in their words, and carriage, by their chearful walking, running the way of His Commandements, and inciting others to His praise; for this concerning the time of Laughter and Dancing, is also to be taken in reference to our Duty, that the Time of His Healing, Building, and Planting formerly spoken of, is to be observed and made use of by His People, who should then express their joy, as the Words signify, *There is a time to laugh and a time to dance*.

Ver. 5. *A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.*

THe first Two of these Instances, concerning the Time of *Casting away* and *Gathering stones*, may be taken for a proverbial kind of speech, made use of 1. To signify the Duty of dependance upon Gods Providence, and acknowledgment of Him, who hath the timing of mens undertakings, even their smallest matters in His hand. 2. The expedience of mens observing according to the revealed will of God, the fittest seasons for their Actions. And 3. To check and reprove the folly of men who slight Him, and the observation of these seasons even in their smallest matters. They may be also understood of the time of mens preparing materials for any enterprise, as minding them, that they are so under dominion of Gods Providence, that he can in His time, make them undo what they have formerly done, and either of these ways, the sense is subservient to the scope to make men constant in dependance upon, and acknowledgment of Him, who hath the Time of all Events in His hand; and doth direct men to time their undertakings aright.

As for the other two, concerning the time of *Embracing* and *refraining* therefrom, they are to be understood of the expressions of love, whether from the Lord to His people, which he gives and withholds only in His Own Times *Cant. 2. 6.* Or among His People themselves *Gen. 29. 13. 1 Cor. 7. 5.* It is safe to comprehend both, seeing the Scriptures cited exprels both in such termes, and both are agreeable to the Scope, for working the heart to submission under the changes of His Dispensations, whole love is constant, and to teach men Dependence upon Him for direction when to exprels their love to others, and when to refrain therefrom.

Hence Learn. 1. Men ought not only to depend upon God, as the carver out of the times of their more weighty undertakings, and these which seem to them of greatest concernment in the World; and to observe carefully the right timing of these; but they ought to do the same in the smallest matters, For even of such may these instances be understood, and so taken literally, God must be looked unto even in such things as these, *There is a time to cast away Stones, and a time to gather Stones together:*

2. When men are employed in preparing materials for any of their Enterprizes in this World, they should consider that they are so under the dominion of Gods Providence, that He may soon make them meet with the time when they shall be necessitate to undoe what they have done of that kind, that so they may keep their hearts from excess of delight in Worldly things; For this lesson makes to *Solomons* Scope, and so is intended by these instances *There is a time to gather stones, and a time to cast them away.*

3. The Lord hath His Own times set, for *Embracing* of, or manifesting His favour to His People, by His spirit, clearing to them the work of His Grace *1 Cor. 2. 12.* Strengthening their faith to Embrace the promises *Heb. 11. 13.* And so filling them with joy unspeakable, and full of Glory. *1 Pet. 1. 8.* Which

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seasons though they be absolutely in His own Power, and particularly known to Him alone, yet doth His People ordinarily meet with them, when they are most deeply humbled in the sense of their sins *Isai. 61. 3.* when they are under saddest sufferings, especially for His name *Ath. 16. 25.* And when they have been at the sorest battel to maintain the faith of His love, while they wanted the sense of it *Jer. 21. 18. 20.* For in reference to the Lords Dispensations with His People, may this be understood, *There is a time to embrace.*

4. Though the Lord never cease to love His own *Job. 13. 1.* yet doth he see it fit sometimes to restrain Himself from the manifestations, and expressions of His love, that they may be corrected and humbled for undervaluing the same, and incited to greater diligence in seeking after new manifestations thereof *Cant. 5. 3. 6.* For with the Lord also *There is a time to refrain from embracing* of His People.

5. As there are seasons to be observed and made use of, for expressing of our affection to others, such as the time of their distress, and deep affliction *1 Sam. 23. 16.* and when they are ready to be discouraged by Jealousies of our affection to them *Gal. 4. 19.* So upon the other hand, there are times of refraining from, and keeping up these expressions, even when love it self is intertained, as when our refraining serves to humble others for their former unkindness to us, or when we have ground to think they will make a bad use of the expressions of our respect *Gen. 43. 31.* In which and the like cases *There is a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.*

Vcr. 6. A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away.

IT is clear that these Four Instances are mainly to be understood of things Temporal, and of an earthly concernment, seeing things Spiritual and Heavenly being once gotten, can ne-

ver be lost *Rom. 11. 29.* Nor is there any time wherein men ought to think of parting with them *Prov. 23. 23.* so that the time of getting is both the time which God hath foreappointed, and which men ought to observe and make use of, for purchasing such a measure of things Worldly, as He hath allotted for them: *Next*, The Time of Losing is that which God hath foreordained, wherein men shall be necessitate to lose these things, and which men should (not desire, but) expect and prepare for. *Thirdly* the Time of Keeping is not to be understood as if there were any time wherein men should give out nothing for holy uses, which were contrary to *Psal. 37. 26.* and other Scriptures; but of that Time which Providence hath allotted men for enjoying things earthly, and wherein they ought to leave no lawful means un essayed for retaining of them. And *lastly*, The Time of Casting away is not to be understood, as if men at any time should take on voluntary Poverty, but that there is a Time fixed wherein Gods Providence calls men, not only to submit to lose, but voluntarily and cheerfully, to part with all they have, in the cases afterward mentioned.

Hence Learn. 1. As it is lawful and necessary for men to make use of opportunities of getting or purchasing things Worldly, providing they seek no more than a competency *Prov. 30. 8.* that they seek things heavenly in the first place *Matt. 6. 33.* And that they take the time and means approved for that end, *2 Kings 5. 26.* So ought they even when they are so getting, or purchasing to depend upon the Lord as having the season thereof in His hand, and who can easily disappoint them, when they have most promising opportunities of getting gain *1am. 4. 13.* For, both of the time appointed by the Lord, and of the time which men ought to observe, is this instance to be understood. *There is a time get.*

2. As the Lord hath Times appointed for exercising His People with Worldly losses, that they may see the vanity of
Earthly

Earthly things, and no more choice them for their portion, but seek after a better and more durable substance; So even while men have prosperous times of Getting, they ought to think upon Times of Losing these things and to loose their hearts from them; For, as *There is a time to get, so, there is a time to lose.*

3. As the Lord hath appointed the time wherein men shall Keep what they have; during which time, all the plots and purposes of men to impoverish them, shall prove ineffectual; So there is a Time wherein men ought to endeavour the Keeping of what they have, by the use of all lawful means, defending their Worldly enjoyments and estates *2 Sam. 10. 12.* That they may employ the same for Gods honour, the supply of the poor and benefite of their posterity, so long as they may with a good Conscience get them kept: For, *There is a time to keep, &c.*

4. The Lord hath times set, wherein He calls His People not only to be submissive to loss their goods and Worldly Estates, but also voluntarily to part with them, and sometimes actively to put them away from them, especially when His Providence puts them under a necessity either of parting with His Truth, or these things *Heb. 10. 34.* When His Cause or People cannot otherwise be upheld *Act. 4. 34.* Or when their own lives are in such hazard, that they must cast them from them, as a mean of Preservation thereof. *Act. 28. 38.* In which and the like cases, *There is a time to cast away,*

Ver. 7. A time to rent, and a time to sew: a time to keep silence, and a time to speak:

THe first Two of these Instances concerning the times of Renting, and Sewing, are mainly to be understood in reference to these Dispensations of the Lord, whereby at one time, which He hath set and fixed, He testifies His just displeasure

pleasure against men; by marring their peace, and Union among themselves; or by Renting them from their Enjoyments: And at another time fore-appointed by Him, He heals these divisions again, and that because the word *Renting* is frequently used in scripture in this sense (but never to express any thing of mans Duty); and the Metaphore or similitude which is in it from the Renting of a Garment, is made use of in Scripture expressly to set forth such a Dispensation 1 Sam. 15. 27. Both which, viz. The inflicting of these Rents, as a punishment, and the Sewing, or Healing of them as a favour, are here ascribed to be in Gods Hand for the Timing of them; As for the other Two of *Silence* and *Speech*, They are mainly to be understood in reference to Mans Duty of observing the opportunities of these, as contributing much for his own Peace, and preventing his own and others vexation; Because under the like expressions the Scripture elsewhere presseth the Government of the tongue for that same end, Jam. 1. 19.

Hence Learn. 1. The Lord hath a Holy Hand in the Rents and Divisions that are among men, and hath the time of exercising them therewith set, and fixed, whereby He intends to correct and humble them, for their not adhering to Him and His way, and often to make way for some further stroke to be inflicted upon them, thereby weakning them before their common enemy, 1/ai. 9. 21. For, with a provoked God, *There is a time to rent.*

2. The time of healing these Rents, whether of Nations, Churches, or paricular Societies, are in Gods hand, and fixed by Him; which He brings about, especially, when People Rent their hearts by Godly sorrow for these sins which have provoked Him so to Rent them Joel. 2. 13. And when He intends to give deliverance from these Judgments, whereof these Rents were the forerunners Ex. 32. 16. And so He is to be acknowledged, and intreated for this mercy, as Paul doth in the behalf of a Rented Church 2 Cor. 13. 11. For, He hath fixed a time to sew.

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3. There are some seasons, which the Lords People ought carefully to observe, wherein they are to hold their peace, and to refrain from speaking even that which is in it self good, and might prove so to others. As 1. When we are called to learn from others *Job. 32. 7.* 2. When men turn brutish, and declare themselves incapable of profiting, and the more enraged in their wickedness, the more they are spoken to *Math. 7. 6.* and so incorrigible that others can neither have access to deal with them, nor with God for them *Amos. 5. 13.* And 3. When the Truth hath been often before, sufficiently asserted and cleared even to their conviction *Math. 27. 14.* In which and the like cases *There is a time to be silent.*

4. There are also opportunities of Speaking, which all the Lords People ought to observe, and make use of, wherein they cannot without sin be silent, as when they are called to give a testimony to known truth *1 Pet. 3. 15.* When they see their Brother sin, and have opportunity to rebuke him. *Lev. 19. 17.* When they see him in affliction, standing in need of a word of comfort from them *1 Thes. 4. 18.* And when these that have a call to speak publickly to the Lords People are Born down *Mal. 3. 16.* And especially there are times of Speaking to, and instructing of the seunder their charge *Dent. 6. 7.* And the Lord is to be depended upon for light to discern these particular seasons, and for the matter and manner of Speaking in them *Prov. 16. 1.* In all which and the like cases *There is a time to speak.*

Ver. 8. *A time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war, and a time of peace.*

THe first Two of these Instances may be understood of the seasons which God hath fixed for manifesting His dominion over the passions and affections of men sometimes by turning them to Favour whom and when he pleaseth; *Exod.*

3. 21. At other times again in His Holy Providence turning their hearts to hate these same Persons; *Pfal.* 105. 25. And so consequently of these seasons which He hath set for manifesting His love, and just displeasure, against the Children of men, seeing the Scripture attributes to Him, speaking of Him after the manner of man, and in regard of His Dispensations, *A time of Love; Ezek.* 16. 8. And of *Hatred*, or Indignation, *Ezek.* 22. 24. The same Instances may be also understood of these seasons, which men ought to observe for manifesting their Love, and expressing their Indignation, not against the persons, but the sinful courses of others. As for the other Two Instances of *War* and *Peace*, They are to be taken for these seasons, which the Lord hath set for manifesting His Displeasure against the sons of men, by sending *War*, and the consequents thereof upon them, and for manifesting His Mercy toward them in restoring *Peace* to them again: And likewise for these seasons which men ought to observe, wherein to prepare themselves for, and ingadge themselves in *War*, and wherein again to apply themselves, and condescend unto terms of *Peace* with their enemies: The due observation, and use-making of all which, contributes much to that which is the Preachers scope, to work the hearts of men to contentment under all changes of Dispensations, considering that the Timing of all these is in Gods Hand.

Hence Learn. 1. The Lord is to be acknowledged, and depended upon as having absolute dominion over the passions and affections of all Men, so as they cannot *Love* or *Hate*, but at the times that He hath set, nor can they manifest either Love or Hatred, but as He pleases, who doth by their Love or Hatred manifest His Own free favour, or just displeasure as He thinks fit, and therefore His favour is to be sought above all things; *Pfal.* 63. 3. and His Displeasure only to be feared *Psal.* 76. 7. who hath fixed these times wherein men shall manifest their Love or Hatred, and His Majesty shall thereby signify

nise His Own favour, or Displeasure; For, *There is a time to Love, and a time to Hate.*

2. Although it be never lawful to Hate the persons of any; no not of our greatest enemies *Mat. 5. 44.* Yet there are some seasons wherein it will be lawful and necessary to express Hatred of their courses; viz. when they are found hateful before the Lord, and some seasons also wherein we will be called to carry our selves, even toward these of our nearest relations as if we did Hate them; to wit, by forsaking them for Christ, when we cannot enjoy Him and them both *Luk. 14. 26.* In which and the like cases, *There is a time to Hate.*

3. However the Lord be free of the sinfulness of mens undertaking and prosecuting of Wars, seeing they do often propose other ends, and take other means and ways for them than He approves of in His Word *Isa. 10. 7. Zach. 1. 15.* Yet He is Commander in chief of all Armies, and hath the Time of the rise and continuance of War in His Hand; And that Time in Reference to His People, is especially when they have much abused His Love and Goodness in peaceable times; *Hos. 11. 4. 6.* When they turn oppressors one of another, and Covenant-breakers even in Civil Affairs; *Jer. 34. 17.* When they come to avow and defend their wickedness *Ezek. 21. 9.* 24. When they content themselves with the outward forme of Religion; *Jer. 6. 20, 21, 25.* When they slight the offers of the everlasting Covenant *Lev. 26. 25.* And yet remain fearless of threatened Judgment, *Jer. 17. 4. 12.* These being in Scripture made the procuring causes of War upon Peoples part, may safely be taken for the signs of the time here spoken of *There is a time of War.* viz. in reference to Gods inflicting of it as a Judgment.

4. As there are seasons wherein War may be lawfully undertaken by the Lords People; as when their Religion, lives, and liberties are unjustly invaded; *Exod. 10. 17.* And so the ground or cause of engaging in Wars just and necessary;

Jud. 2. 12, 13. And when they have probable means of prosecuting the same *Luk. 14. 21.* So is it the Duty of the Lords People to observe these seasons, and not to delight in War, so as to anticipate the season thereof, *Psal. 68. 30.* Nor so to love their ease, as to refuse to engage therein when Gods time comes; *Judge. 5. 16, 23.* For of the season wherein men may and ought to undertake War, this may be understood *There is a time of War.*

5. As the Lord hath His appointed seasons wherein He maketh Wars to cease, *Psal. 46. 4.* And so makes Peace in His Peoples borders; *Psal. 147. 14.* which are especially when He hath humbled His People for these sins which have procured such a Judgment; *Isai. 57. 18, 19.* And sets them about the Reformation of their ways. *Hos. 2. 16, 17, 18.* When the cup of Their iniquity, who made War against His People, is full: *Gen. 15. 16.* And Gods work intended by them is wrought: *Isai. 10. 12.* So there are seasons also to be observed, and made use of by the Lords People, wherein they ought to condescend to terms of Peace with these against whom they did justly undertake War, to wit, When the end of their undertaking is gained, and they may with Peace enjoy truth and these outward liberties and priviledges which God hath allowed upon them; For, this hath respect both to the Lords Dispensation, and to mans Duty *There is a time of Peace.*

Ver. 9. *What profit hath he that worketh, in that wherein he laboureth?*

10. *I have seen the travel which God hath given to the sons of men, to be exercised in it.*

WE have heard of the first consideration serving to work the hearts of them that will take Gods way of seeking Happiness, to contentment with their Lot, and to wean the hearts of all from seeking Happiness in things Earthly; *etc.* That the time of all Events is in Gods Hand.

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Here follow some further considerations to the same purpose. The Second in order is held out in this Question *What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?* Which is not spoken to condemn lawful diligence even about things earthly; But the meaning of it is (as was more fully cleared upon the like Words *Chap. 1. ver. 3*) That there is no true profit in that sort of Labour, which can render a man truly Happy, or that will Abide and Remain with a man (as the Word signifies) of all his anxious toilsome pains (as the Word translated *To Labour* signifies) which he takes to make up for himself an earthly Happiness *ver. 9*. The Third consideration is, That God hath imposed upon all the Children of Men (and none of them by all their wit or power can shun it) this sore Travel, even to wrestle therewith such various changes of Dispensations, as have been formerly exprest, so that there can be no true Happiness, or Contentment attained, if he be not looked unto, who hath the Time of every sad, or comfortable event in His Hand: And this he sets down as a thing certainly known to himself in his own experience, who had found several of these Times spoken of before, go over his head; and had observed the same in others beside him. The fourth is, That God send in this variety of Dispensations, is good, to wit, That man should be exercised therein, to keep him from settling upon this Earth, as if Happiness could be, where so many ups and downs are, or, that he may be humbled thereby (as the Word *Exercised*, most properly, and according to the most frequent use of it in Scripture, signifies) *ver. 10*.

Hence Learn. 1. However deluded sinners seeking their Happiness in things Earthly, apprehend profit to be only in things of that sort, and in nothing els; *Prov. 1. 13. Mal. 3. 14*. Yet while men take not Gods way for Happiness, they gain nothing by all their work, which deserves the name of profit or Advantage, seeing they lose Gods favour and fellowship, and their own Souls, *What profit hath he that worketh, in that wherein he laboureth*

2. Nothing is to be reckoned the true Profit or Advantage of a mans work but that which is permanent and, and will abide with him, as nothing earthly can do, only the Graces of Gods spirit abide in the exercise of them with the Saints in Death, *Prov. 14. 32.* And their good Works abide with them thorow all Eternity, in the Gracious reward of them *Rev. 14. 13.* For, this word *Profit*, signifies a thing Permanent, or Remaining, and concerning such a thing the Question is, *What profit hath he that worketh, in that wherein he laboureth.*

3. Men that are most earnest in the pursuit of things Earthly, are most slow and unwilling to consider what real Profit will redound to them by their pains, and can very hardly be moved to Examine their Consciences seriously, by putting this Question to them; which if they did, they might see that nothing deserving the name of Profit could be condescended upon and their Consciences might be forced to answer, if they would weigh Profit in the Balance of the Sanctuary, that they have none of it at all: And therefore Christs Ministers should often urge mens Consciences with Questions to this purpose, Concerning the abiding Profit, or Advantage of their way; For, after the Preacher had put this to men in the beginning of this Book, he comes here again to urge them with it, *What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth.*

4. The Lord hath imposed this as an inevitable Lot, upon all the Children of men, which none of them, though never so far advanced above the common rank of men, can with all their wit or power eschew, that they shall have a toilsome and wearisome life (as the Words *fore travel*, here signify) wrestling thorow various changes of their condition, that hereby they may be convinced of the insufficiency of created things, and their pains about them; to bring to them any True Happiness, and so may be moved to imploy their Travel for some better things, and to make sure a state that cannot be shaken, for which cause it is that *Solomon* here offers this consideration

tion. *This sore travel hath God given to the sons of men &c.*

5. Although it increase the Anxiety of wicked men, to consider that sad Dispensations are inevitable 1 Sam. 31. 4. Yet it serves to work contentment and submission to the pleasure of God in the hearts of the Godly, who know that all of these shall work for their good Rom. 8. 28. For this consideration is held out to quiet their hearts under all changes. *Thus sore travel God hath given to the sons of men.*

6. They who have a Calling publick to hold out the mind of God to others, ought to be much in the observation of His way with themselves and others, that they may see in His Dispensations, His truths verified, and so may avow their own experience, when the same may tend to the advantage of the truth; For, here Solomon holds out this as experimentally known to himself, *I have seen the travel which God hath given.*

7. Gods great End in all the various Changes of Dispensations, from Comforts to Crosses, and on the contrary, is to keep man in exercise; that under the sweetest he may think it his Duty to be exercised in Praise, and in preparation for sadder; And under the saddest, to be exercised in Prayer, and the use of other means for support, direction and comfort; and so may be alwise busie: For, if men were still under sad Dispensations, they would sink in discouragement Psal. 37. 16. And if still under prosperous and comfortable Dispensations, they would fall asleep in deep security Psal. 30. 6. Therefore. *This travel God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.*

8. All the various Dispensations of the Lord with the Children of men, and the Exercises which these Dispensations call them to, aim at their further Humiliation: Sweet and comfortable Dispensations are to humble them in the sense of their unworthiness of them, and inability to Praise for, or walk suitable to them; Sad Dispensations are for their humbling in the sense of their sin procuring these, and deserving worse; and the Exercises to which these call them, should also humble them,

them, considering their inability to go about them, for one Word signifies (To be Exercised, and to be humbled) importing, That as all His Dispensations tend to the Exercising of men, so both Dispensations and Exercises suitable to them, should produce more and more Humiliation. *This travel hath God given to the sons of men, to be exercised in it, or, as the Words may be rendered, To be humbled by it.*

Ver. II. *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time : also he hath set the world in their heart; so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*

THe Fifth Consideration serving to work the hearts of men to contentment under various changes of Dispensations is, *That God hath made every thing beautiful in its season,* Though this have a truth as to the Works of Creation, every one whereof hath its own beauty. *Gen. I. 13.* And likewise as these actions which are most deformed in the hands of men, seeing even these as they are in Gods hand, and ordered by His Providence, have their own beauty, *Gen. 50. 20.* Yet it is mainly to be understood of these Divine Dispensations, or Works of Providence formerly mentioned : not only these of them which are most desirable to men, such as *Planting, building up, healing, peace &c.* But *plucking up, breaking down, killing, war &c.* have a beauty in them to a spiritual discerner, who can find out by the light of the Word, and Spirit, the Mind of God in these, and see them brought to pass by His Providence in the seasons fittest for attaining His ends; and can read these attributes of His Wisdom, Power, Love, and the like which are written upon them, and so they are worthy to draw mens hearts to delight in the consideration of them, and cheerfully to submit to them.

And if it be inquired how it comes to pass, that the most

part of men do not see this beauty; and so do not willingly submit unto, but vex themselves and repine at these sad Dispensations of His; The Preacher giveth Two Reasons hereof. 1. The Lord hath set the World in their heart, that is, He hath justly left their hearts to be wholly taken up with their gain, Glory, and pleasure Worldly; seeing they choise these things for their portion: And hence it comes, which is the Second reason; that they cannot find out His work, that is His mind in His Dispensations by comparing one of them with another, and looking upon them all as one intire piece of work in His hand, Therefore they see not the beauty of them, and do not chearfully submit unto them.

Hence Learn. 1. Not only the Works of Creation have a lustre and beauty in them, in so far as the Glorious Wisdom, Power, Goodness, and other Attributes of the Creator, shine in them, *Psal. 19. 1: Rom. 1. 20.* But even these Works of Providence which seem blackest unto men, have a great deal of ravishing beauty: *Josephs* being sold, *Job* spoiled and plagued, *Daniel* in the Lyons Den, *Christ* betrayed, and nailed upon the Cross; These and the like, although being looked upon as in the hand of instruments, they seem to have nothing but deformity in them, yet being looked upon, as Gods Workes, and according to His intent, and the result of them, they have a ravishing beauty in them, and many of His fair Attributes written upon them; For, saith the Wise man, *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.*

However we would have our tryals delayed longer, and our deliverances coming sooner, than they do, yet these and all other Dispensations of the Lord fall out in their appointed time, and in the season which is fittest for them, and the observing of them, as wisely timed, and trusted with the fittest opportunity they could have fallen out in, doth serve much to discover the lustre and Beauty of them. For, *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.*

3. It is the sight of the beauty that is in Divine Dispensations, and the Observation of the fitness of the season wherein they fall out, that makes men chearfully submit to them, so that when we murmur at, and weary of Dispensations, it is because we see not the beauty that is in them, or do not look upon them, as falling out in the season fittest for them, For, this is a consideration held out, to quiet and comfort the hearts of men, under sad Dispensations, *That he hath made every thing beautiful in his time.*

4. Although the Lord be free of mens sin, and doth nothing to induce them to any thing contrary to His Will *7am. 1. 13.* yet when men contrary to His revealed Will, and their own light, choise the things of this earth for their portion, He doth justly give them up to serve their idols, and (though they do not enjoy them, yet) to pour out their desires and affections upon them, for it is of Gods Judicial giving up of men to serve their Worldly lusts, who have chosen the same for their Portion, that Solomon here speaks, while he saith, *He hath set the World in their hearts.*

5. Men that are excessively in love with Mammon, or any thing Worldly, whose prime desire is to obtain, their fears to lose, and delights to enjoy the same, they can never discern the beauty, that is in the Lords Dispensations, they are so bent upon the service of their idols that they have neither leasure, nor pleasure, to study His mind in His working; for after the Preacher hath asserted every thing that God doth to be *beautiful in his time*, he giveth this for a reason why men see not that beauty, *The World is set in their heart.*

6. The Beauty of Divine Dispensations, which makes them lovely, and makes men submit unto, and chearfully undergo them, cannot be seen, till one part of Gods working, be compared with another, and the whole, so far as mans mind can reach, viewed at once, by going back in his mind as far as he can, toward Eternity, to consider the Lords foreknowledge

of these things, His Holy purposes and ends in them, so far as the Word manifests these *Ast. 15. 18.* And comparing these with these fair properties of God, His Wisdom, Power, Justice and Mercy, which are legibly written upon them in time, by the help of the Scriptures *Psal. 111. 2, 3, 4.* And by the same help looking forward to Eternity, and considering what shall be the issue and result of all these Dispensations, even Glory to Himself in the manifestation of His Terrour to the wicked, of his mercy and love to His Own, *Rom. 11. 36.* For, this is a Second Reason, why the Beauty of Dispensations is not seen, *man finds not out his work from the beginning to the end.*

7. Though an unrenewed man may sometimes see further into Gods mind, and consequently into the beauty of some of His Dispensations, than a renewed Child of God, while he is under a Cloud of Temptations, can do; *2 Sam. 24. 3.* And however the best of men can never in this life comprehensively find out any of Gods Works, or know what may be known of them, yet these that are most mortified to the World, and whose hearts are most free of cares and delights, about the things thereof, they are fittest to see furthest into Gods Works; For if the World set in mens hearts, be the cause why they cannot find out the Work of God from the beginning to the end, although they may see something in some particular Work of His, than they that have it not in their heart, must have a fair advantage of them for finding out the same *from the beginning to the end.*

Ver. 12. *I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.*

13. *And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.*

THE Sixth Consideration serving to wean mens hearts from the best condition they can be in, in this World, as
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their Chief Good, is, That the most favourable of the Lords outward Dispensations, have no further good in them to man, than to encourage him in following of his Duty to his Maker, and so fit him for a better life.

The Reason why we take *Solomon* here to speak especially of favourable Dispensations, is, that the Duties here commended are mainly suitable to these; and men living under these, are in the fittest Capacity for such Duties.

The *first* of them is, That from the Lords bounty and goodness manifested in his favourable Dispensations, men should draw matter of spiritual Joy, and cheer up his heart in God *I know* (saith he) *that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoyce.*

2. That he should express the same by his activity in following commanded Duties; and what is well pleasing in the sight of God, and persevere in the same while he hath any being, This is *To do good in his life.*

And 3. That in order to the former *Two*, he should freely use the lawful outward comforts of this life comprehended under Eating and Drinking; Whereby must be meant only the Sober and Holy Use of the Creatures, seeing that only is consistent with, and subservient to spiritual Joy, and doing good formerly prest; and this Use of favourable Dispensations he presses by Two Reasons: *First*, Because so man shall enjoy the good of his Labour, that is, he shall have a temporary reward of all his pains and toil in his Duty, even that which is truly good in order to a higher, the enjoying of fellowship with God, while he is making those Uses formerly express of the Lords favourable Dispensations, And *Secondly*, Because this, to wit, the Power and Grace to use these outward comforts cheerfully, and as encouragements in serving the giver, is a free gift of God, over and above the favours themselves.

Hence Learn. 1. While the Lord deals favourably with men in His outward Dispensations, they are every prone to mistake the good that is in their condition, and to apprehend some greater

greater Happiness therein, than they have ground, by taking their present sweetness for their chief good, and the outmost that is to be desired *Psal.* 4. 6. And rejoicing more in the same than in the Giver *Deut.* 8. 14. Therefore the Wise-man doth not positively and simply assert the right use of these favourable Dispensations, but finds it necessary to deny that there is any other good deservedly so called in things of that nature, than what is here pointed at; and confirms the same by opposing his own certain Knowledge and Experience to other mens Fancies. *I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice.*

2. However the Lords People want not matter of rejoicing in their saddest condition *1 Pet.* 1. 6. Nor of Humiliation in their best in this life *Psal.* 2. 11. Yet when the Lord is dealing bountifully with them even in His outward Dispensations, they are then in a special manner called to spiritual Joy, whereby they comfort themselves in Him as theirs, more than in His favours *Psal.* 118. 13. 14. And go cheerfully about His service *Isa.* 64. 5. This being the end of all His Liberality *Psal.* 30. 10. 11. And that which is mainly expected from them by others of His People *Psal.* 142. 7. For Spiritual Joy, as the principal Duty of one living under favourable Dispensations, is here recommended. *There is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice. &c.*

3. All the cheerfulness and recreation of spirit that men get by the comfortable Passages of Gods Providence toward them, should incite them to well-doing, especially to Duties relating to the Lords publick Work in the World. *2 Chron.* 24. 16. Duties of Equity and Righteousness in their dealings with men, that when their hearts are cheered and lifted up with favourable Providences they turn not to injustice and oppression *Mat.* 5. 44. And Duties of Charity and Beneficence to the poor and afflicted that are not so well dealt with *1 Tim.* 6. 18. All which the Scriptures cited make clear to be that doing good in Gods sight which is here recommended as that whereby spiritual rejoicing, and cheerfulness ought to be evidenced; *There is no good*

good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and do good in his life.

4. None can do any thing which is truly good in Gods sight, unless he have first some measure of spiritual Joy, in God, flowing from the faith of acceptation with Him thorow Christ, which only begets true Joy, *Rom. 5. 1. 2.* And this Joy becomes the Souls strength for every Duty *Neb. 8. 10.* Therefore the Preacher expresses the right use of the Lords favourable Dispensations in this order, that man should first *Rejoyce, and then do good in his life.*

5. They whose Hearts are cheered, by the proofs of the Lords bountie in His dealing with them, and do express that chearfulness by their activity in Duties that may honour Him, they have found that true good which is attainable in this life; And when men either take not the comforts allowed upon them, or do not express and evidence the same by well-doing, they get no good of their greatest Mercies, but much hurt; For this must be the only true Good, which men can attain by all the comfortable Passages of Gods Providence in their Life, seeing as the Wise-man saith, *There is no good in them, but that a man should rejoice and do good in his life.*

6. There is no shorter term of doing good, than the term of Life, nor is there any part of a mans Life to be otherwise employed, whereunto he should be ingadged by considering that he will not have after this Life, opportunity or advantage to do good, as he hath here, by gaining and alluring others to Duty toward God; For, so saith the Preacher. *That a man should do good in his Life, to wit, along his whole time.*

7. Although the Creature comforts are alwise to be used in a Holy and sober manner: *1 Tim. 4. 4. 5.* And never as fewel to mens Lusts *Deut. 6. 11. 12.* yet when the Lord is dealing more Liberally with men in outward things, than at other times, he doth allow a more liberal, and cheartull use of the Creatures upon them, that so they may be the more strengthened and encouraged for these weighty Duties which are suitable for
such

such Dispensations; For, seeing it is Gods allowance alwayes while he continues life, and the use of the Creatures for the maintainance thereof, that men should *Eat and Drink*; This Eating and Drinking here recommended, must be meant of a more free and chearful use of these things, under His more favourable Dispensations, especially considering that it must be subservient to the former Two, *Rejoicing, and Doing good, And also that every man should eat and drink.*

8. Although the Lord may give to his People abundance of outward things for which they have not laboured, *Deut. 6. 11.* Yet it is His mind that every one who takes the comfort of the Creatures should be employed in some honest lawful Labour, while they have Ability, whereof their Eating and Drinking may be the fruit of reward, for while man Eats and Drinks he should be enjoying *the good of his Labour.*

9. When men use the comfort of the Creatures, such as Meat, Drink, and the like, and are thereby cheared in their hearts, and encouraged in Duty to God; then, and never but then, do they *enjoy the good of their Labour*, Without this their table is but a snare to them; For, this Enjoying the good of a mans Labour is brought in as the result of what is before. *That a man rejoice and do good and eat and drink, and so enjoy the good of his Labour.*

10. Not only the plenty of Creature comforts, and the power to use them; but especially the Grace to use them aright, by drawing matter of spiritual Joy from them, and incitement to Duty, is Gods special Gift, which should be thankfully acknowledged by men, while they use them, And not taken as the Beasts do, without minding the Giver: For, all the former, to wit, Creature comforts, the Power to use them, and to Rejoice, and Do Good, are here called *The gift of God*. And this is held out as a Reason why men should take their allowance and use it as hath been shown.

Here are Three further considerations offered to the minds of the Lords People, for quieting them under all the changes of His Dispensations.

The Seventh in order is, Concerning the unchangeable and permanent course of the Lords Working, according to His eternal purposes, and this is confirmed from Salomons own Experience, *I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever*: Which is not to be understood of Gods Works of Creation; seeing the most part of these must be dissolved, 2 Pet. 3: 7. And yet the Words hold out a truth concerning these Works, as to their permanency, while time endures, which is sometimes express'd by this Word *for ever*: Nor is it to be understood of His Works of Providence, considered in themselves, seeing these are transient, and one of them succeedeth to another, as War and Peace, and the rest, which he instanced before, and so cannot be *for ever*, simply: But the meaning is, that all His Dispensations shall be *for ever*, in regard of the effects of them, which are the main ends intended by Him in them, to wit, His glory and the good of His Elect: and that all these changes of Dispensations shall constantly and unchangeably fall out in these Periods of time: which he hath set for them in His Eternal Council, whereof every thing that He doth in time is a part of the Execution, so as all the wit and endeavours of men cannot hinder or interrupt a Work of His, or put it out of His Time: but whatever He pleases to do shall always fall out in His appointed time, and therefore it is every mans Duty contentedly to undergoe these Dispensations, taking what comfort the Lord allows, for encouraging his heart in Duty to Him.

The Eighth is Concerning the absolute perfection of all His Works

Works. Nothing can be added to them from without. Which is not to be understood of Gods absolute Power, which could manifest more displeasure in man, or to win in His Dispensations, than he doth. But upon supposition of His decrees, there can be no change, and in respect of men, whose wit, or power can neither add to, nor diminish from what His Providence intends to bring forth, and considering these Dispensations of His, whether such as are comfortable, or terrible to men, in regard of their subserviency to His holy Ends, the manifestation of His Glory, in punishing, Trying, or comforting the Children of men, they are absolutely perfect, and compleat, nothing can be added to, nor taken from them, to make them fitter for attaining these ends. Therefore ought men to acquiesce in them as perfect, and not to be Censured, or Murmured at.

The *Answer*, Concerning the great ends of all Gods Dispensations, to wit, that men considering themselves so completely under the dominion of His infallible Providence, may make it their great Study, under all changes, to keep their hearts in fear of offending Him, so may they enjoy true contentment under them all.

Hence we may Learn. 1. That amidst all the changes of Dispensations, and seeming confusions that are in the World, all things are infallibly, and unchangeably carried on, according to the wise predetermination of God, so that His purposes are always in executing, and his pleasure always in fulfilling, and He still gaining His holy ends, which He hath proposed to Himself, even by these things, which men are contrary to His revealed will, and what ever be mens sinful ends and miscarriage, who are Instrumental in the carrying on of these things, for (saith the Preacher) *I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever.*

2. The believing consideration of this infallibility of events according to the Lords Eternal purpose, and the standing order wherein He hath set them, is a powerful mean to possess the

the hearts of men to quiet themselves, and to obediently
to the Lord, and all the changes of their life. For *John*
offers it for this *Gal. 3* as a tract experimentally known to him-
self, and which has that effect upon him; *For when I see what God*
doeth, it shall be for ever *John 14* *For I have said all that I have*

1. However, our being dark concerning the Lords Work-
ing *Job 23* in any yet contrary of his own will *Job 41* *12* hath
a quivering humour, ready to call in what God doeth, and
would have more mitigation in his trials, more sweetness in
his comforts, and somewhat of the Duration, and weight of
his Crosses taken away from them *Job 7* *19*. Yet all the Lords
Dispensations taken as they are without Addition or Dimin-
tion, serve most for attaining His holy, and wise Ends, and
if they were in the least changed, they could not be so subser-
vient as they are, for attaining of them; For in reference to the
ends intended by the Lord, the Preacher thus commends the
perfection of His Working, *Nothing can be added to it, nothing*
can be taken from it *Job 42* *12*

2. Nor only shall the Lords Dispensations for the substance
and kind of them, fall out unchangeably according to His mind
but even for the quality, and circumstances thereof, they must
be as He hath resolved. There cannot be the least ingredient
of more bitterness added to any of His Dispensations, nor a
grain weight of His allowed consolation taken from them by
any creature; For of the quality, and circumstances of His
Working, may this also be understood, *Nothing can be put to it,*
nothing can be taken from it *Job 42* *12*

3. Man can never contentedly submit unto, nor cheerfully
follow his Duty under the changes of the Lords Dispensations
untill he do in some measure apprehend the absolute perfecti-
on of them, in order to the Lords ends intended by them;
and when the same is seen, it is sufficient for Working the
heart to that frame; For, that they may be contentedly un-
dergone, and Duty followed under them all, this is here held

Vol. 15. *That which hath been, is new; and that which is new, hath already been; and God requireth that which is old.*

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Here are Two further considerations, serving as motives to, or Arguments for submission and contentment, under the faddest of Divine Dispensations.

The *First* in order is, That the Lord in Exercising men with faddest Dispensations, deals not with them in strange and unusual ways; And the Preacher holds out in Two expressions, The one is, *That which hath been, is new*, which cannot be understood of such extraordinary Dispensations, as sometimes the Lords people had been under: seeing the like were not in *Solomon's* time, nor of what the Lord may do in some singular cases, to declare His Sovereignty; by inflicting some strange and unparalleled Judgement upon a people, or person, differing especially for circumstances, and degrees of internels from what hath been before: But the meaning is, that in the ordinary course of Gods Providence, men are exercised with no other sad Dispensations, than the same of instance, wherewith others before them have been exercised; so that hereby the Preacher doth correct the mistake of those who think themselves singularly dealt with by every sad Dispensation, and that the like hath never been before: The other expression *And that which is new, hath already been*, is to the same purpose, only with this difference, that by this the Preacher doth correct their mistake who think the like of their Crosses hath not been before; and by this he guards against the fears of uncouth and strange Dispensations for the future; seeing men have no ground to vex themselves with the expectation of such, especially if they keep themselves in Gods way.

And because there are ordinarily to the Gods people the saddest Dispensations and most vexing, in the punishing wherewith wicked men are instructed: *Job* 21. 13. Therefore he adds *So shall the Consideration to quiet hearts under these*; And

it is of the Lords vindicating the wrongs of His People, *God requireth that which is past*, saith he, The Word [Requireth] according to the frequent use of it in Scripture signifies *To vindicate or Avenge*. *Iosua 22. 23. Psal. 9. 12.* the wrongs of People their oppressions and sufferings which are past; And this exposition is confirmed by considering the signification of the last Word in the verse *that which is past*, Which may be rendered as some translators do, (One that is oppress; or him that is persecuted) and so the meaning is, The Lord makes inquisition for, and doth Avenge the by past wrongs of His oppress, and persecuted People; And this serves much for quieting their hearts under the hardest usage in the World; It is true this expression *God requireth that which is past*, is subservient to the Scope and clearing of the former consideration, if it be understood of the Lords calling back former Dispensations, sometimes the same Crosses for substance, to exercise the present Generation with, which have been in the former, and at other times restoring their wonted comforts again, which should make men submissive to sad, and use a right sweet Dispensations, yet it seems most agreeable to the scope, and especially to the purpose immediately subjoined in the following verse, to understand this Clause as hath been formerly explained.

Hence Learn. 1. Men have ordinarily so little acquaintance with the Scriptures, and the Lords way of dealing with others, so little sense of their own deservings, and so much self-love, that they are apt to apprehend their Crosses singular, and such as never any before have met with; For, this is the mistake which the Spirit of the Lord here contradicts while he saith *That which hath been is now*.

One great ground of mens vexation and want of submission under the tryals wherewith the Lord Exercises them, is, that they look upon them as singular, and without a parallel in former times; For, as this is supposed to be mens apprehension, so the same is supposed to be also removed and contra-

dicted

dicted, as the ground of their vexation, and want of submission under trials. *That which hath been is now.*

3. However the sad Dispensations of the present time may vary for some circumstances and for the instruments of inflicting of them; from these that have been before, yet for the substance of them, the prime efficient of them, and their being at His disposal; for which weighty mitigation, continuance or removal; and the like, they are still one and the same. And the Lords intention in Exercising men with them, the same also, in which sense it is here asserted concerning them, *That which hath been is now.*

4. It serves much for quieting mens hearts; and working them to submission under sad Dispensations; to look upon them as nothing singular, but as common to men, and such as others like our selves have wrestled thorow; considering that in these others, the Lord hath given proof of His Power, faithfulness, and love, in sustaining and delivering them; And these same properties are engaged to be yet forthcoming for all that wait upon Him in faith; For, as a ground of quietness and submission is this held out, *That which hath been is now.*

5. As men are very apt under the cross not only to vex themselves with their own misapprehensions, as if the like had not been a lot of others before; but likewise when they have overcome that, to renew their own vexation, with the groundless, and fearful apprehensions, of some such singular trial, abiding them for the future; as neither themselves nor others have had the like before; so it is the Lords gracious way in His Word, not only to rectify and confute, their present mistakes which may vex them; but to guard them also against their fears of future events; if they will observe His Word, and take pleasure to study and make use of it; For, to both he here by holding out what they may expect as the Lords ordinary way *That which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already been.*

servation of affairs, in former times, and by the light of the spirit of Prophecy, revealing to him what was to be expected ordinarily to fall out, to wit, that in Courts of Justice, and Judgement Seats, where Natures light, Gods Word, and Poor peoples Case, call for Justice and Righteousness, and that sentence should be past against wickedness and injustice, and in favours of Piety and Equity, even there, nothing but the quite contrary oftentimes is to be found; and to signify the greatness of this evil, and the frequency or generality of it, he useth two expressions to the same purpose, for letting it out Ver. 16.

Next, he holds forth to others that consideration which guarded his heart against the vexation which such a sight doth readily work; And this makes the *Twelfth* in numbers, to wit, that God will pass righteous Judgement, both upon the Righteous or them that have a good cause, by absolving them, and avenging their wrongs; And upon the wicked by reversing their unjust sentences, and punishing them for passing of them.

And *twelfth* to make this consideration the more effectual, he enlarges it, by showing that there is a set or fixed time, as the Word signifies, *there*, to wit, with God, or at the day of Judgement, for Judging men as well for their wicked purposes, and intentions, as for their wicked Actions. So that the one *verse* serves to warn mens hearts from seeking Happiness in this World, seeing injustice and oppression is so ordinary in it. And the other serves to comfort these who seek their Happiness else where; against all their unjust sufferings here, from this, that all their causes unjustly induced by men, shall be judged over again.

From ver. 16. Observe 1. As it is the pleasure of the only wise God, to permit men void of true piety, to have Power and Authority in the World, that all may know there is no true Happiness in things of that nature; and that they are not proofs of His love, so such men, when they get power and high places, do ordinarily abuse the same, to in-

justice

justice and oppression; for to signify that it is generally thus, Solomon useth Two expressions to one purpose, *I saw under the sun the place of judgment that wickedness was there &c.*

2 It is a great aggravation of mens sins to be directly contrary to the prime Duties of their calling, and committed in the place where the Graces or Duties to which those sins are contrary, ought to be exercised. For, as an aggravation of this sin of Injustice, Solomon points at the place where it was committed, and consequently the prime Duty of their calling, to which it was contrary *I saw under the sun the place of Judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness that iniquity was there.*

3 The advancement of men to places of power and trust in the World, who abuse the same to the oppression of Plety and Equity, and the promoting of ungodliness and injustice, is a Dispensation that of any other the Lords people had most need to be guarded against tumbling at; and taught how to Judge aright of, seeing Satan takes occasion from thence to tempt the corruption of the best to Atheism, or Denial of a Providence *Mal. 40. 27.* and to join with such men in their sin. *for ways are to them as a straight path.* Therefore doth the Wise-man here fore-warn all following Generations of it, as ordinarily to be expected, and holds out that which may guard the hearts of the Godly against it, *I saw under the sun the place of Judgment, that iniquity was there; &c.* And *I said in my heart God shall Judge. &c.*

4 It is the Duty of those, who have a publick calling, to clear the mind of God to others; not only to discover and threaten the known sins of inferiours and private Persons; but likewise of Publick Judicatures, and Persons in Eminency; that they may be convicted and reformed; for so doth the Preacher here, and in doing acts as an ordinary Minister of Christ *19m. 3. 20. I saw under the sun the place of Judgment, that iniquity was there. &c.*

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5. The Lords Ministers, ought not only to hold out such general grounds of comfort to the Godly, as may reach all their sad cases; but they ought to instance their particular tryals, especially such as prove most vexing; and occasion greatest Temptations to them; and guard them against these Temptations, and apply suitable consolations to these tryals; as here the Preacher doth, *I saw under the sun the place of Judgment, that iniquity was there.* 3. — *I said in my heart, God shall Judge &c.*

6. The consideration of that injustice and oppression, which is ordinarily to be seen in the best ordered Kingdoms and Common-wealths under the sun, should wean the hearts of men from seeking Happiness in this earth, and make them long for and seek after Happiness in that Kingdom above the sun, where only Righteousness dwells 2. Pet. 3. 13. For, to this end also is this Observation of oppression and injustice here related, *I saw under the sun the place of Judgment, that iniquity was there &c.*

From ver. 17. Learn. 1. As the Lords Messengers ought to digest with themselves, and as it were; first, speak in their own hearts, every truth before they deliver it to others, so especially the consolations which they hold out to the afflicted that they may speak because they believe, considering that even they may stand in need of these consolations as well as others; For so doth Solomon here, *I said in my heart God shall Judge.*

2. God will undoubtedly Judge over again all causes that have been iniquously judged in the world, and with this consideration the believing Soul should comfort it self against Injustice from men, as here Solomon doth, and teaches others by his example to do the same, *I said in my heart God shall Judge the righteous and the wicked.*

3. Though the particular time of the last Judgment be unknown to men and Angels Malachi 3. 6. yet it is known to God; and fixed with him; For there is a time. The Word signifies

nifies a determinate and fixed time.) *These*, (to wit, with Him) *for every purpose*, as *Ybbo* edh ot t'omoo to ab'ora l'aron

4. Though there be no ground in Scripture to think that the last Judgment shall take long time, yet this is sure that nothing shall be past by, for want of leisure to cognosce upon it. For, saith he, *I have no time there for every purpose and for every work.*

5. The secret purposes and intentions of mens hearts, shall no less come to be judged in the day of Gods last reckoning with men, than their Actions; For, *There is a time there for every purpose, as well as for every work.*

6. The Lord allows His People, especially when they are oppress'd by men, to comfort themselves in the believing consideration of this last day of His reckoning, when He shall get the Glory of His Justice in the condemnation of His and His Peoples enemies, and of His Justice and Mercy both, in the absolution of His own whom they have condemned: For, as a ground of comfort to the Godly, against the oppression and Injustice of men, this is here held out *God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.*

Ver. 18. *I had in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and they might see that they themselves are beasts.*

19. *For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing befallath them, as the one dyeth; so dyeth the other too. They have all one breath, so that a man hath no preeminency above a beast: for all is vanity.*

20. *All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*

That men in Ennemy abusing their power, may be humbled, and reclaimed from their sinful course, and take hearts

hearts of the Godly guarded against the Temptations arising from their discerning of the perverting of Justice, and oppression of Innocents. *Solomon* holds out a further consideration the *Thirteenth* in number, concerning Gods purpose in disposing so, that such men should come up to places of power and trust in the World, *I said in my heart &c.* while he was meditating upon the State, or (as the Word signifies) the Order which God hath established among men, setting some upon Judgment seats to pass Sentence upon others; And how they did abuse the same by their Injustice, and how others that complained to them of oppression were oppressed by them, he came at last to consider Gods holy purpose in this Dispensation, expressed in two Branches, One is *That God might manifest them*, that is, that He might make known to Onlookers, how perverse Men are, when they have opportunity by being in Eminency and power over others, to show what is in them; The other is, *That they themselves might see that they are Beasts* In so far as they resemble the Beasts in their disposition and carriage, especially in their preying one upon another by their Injustice, and seeking Happiness in their earthly and sensual delights; And because this Holy Man, having this Holy Purpose of God, manifested to him, could not but go along with it in his desires, therefore this, *that he said in his heart concerning the State of the Sinner of men that God might manifest them; &c.* May be taken for his hearty wish or Prayer, to this purpose, *That God might manifest them; and that they might see themselves to be but Beasts!* And so it is clear that this serves both to humble such men and reclaim them from their way. And to quiet the hearts of the Godly who are oppressed by them, considering how base and beastly they are for all their Eminency, and that it is Gods purpose to manifest them to be such. *Ver. 18.*

And next he holds forth such Reasons as are most effectual to convince them of their brutishness, to wit, that they as well

well as the Beasts, are subject to many accidents, or (as the Word translated *Befalleth* signifies) Occurrences of Providence, interrupting them in their injoyment of these earthly delights, wherein they place their Happiness; And particularly that they are both alike subject to death, man having one and the same vital breath, or Animal Spirit, with the Beast, and being as easily cut off as the Beast, so that in these things men have no preeminency above the Beast, though in respect of their rational and immortal Souls, and their condition after death, whereof he speaks afterward, there be a vast difference.

Thirdly, He confirms this proof, by a general assertion, concerning the Vanity or emptiness and insufficiency of all created things, for bringing True contentment, or Happiness to Man, and therefore it is a brutish thing for Men that have immortal Souls to seek their Happiness in Worldly greatness especially upheld by Oppression and Injustice. *Ver. 19*

And *Fourthly*, he doth further enlarge, and illustrate the resemblance betwixt them and the Beasts, by this, that they are all in a motion toward the same place, to wit Corruption, or the state of the dead, and that because Man is of the same Original or mettall, with the Beast, as to his earthly or material Part his Body. And so must be dissolved as the Beast into the dust again *Ver. 20*.

Hence Learn. 1. This is one of the Holy Designes of God in permitting Wicked men to have that power and these places of trust in the World, which they abuse by oppression, and Injustice, that they may manifest that Wickedness which was before latent in them, hid from the World, and themselves also, while they had not such opportunity and Temptations to vent it. *2 King. 8. 13*. The consideration whereof may abate Mens Ambitious Desires, after Worldly Eminency and greatness; for while they are receiving the same, they are but ascending the Stage, whereupon men do ordinarily act, in the view of others and proclaim to the World their own folly and perverseness;

verfulness; And likewise it should make Men in the first place Study the mortification of these Evils; which great places often discover, to the disgrace and ruine of the Persons advanced to them; For upon this Solomon saith he did meditate as Gods purpose and design in permitting that which he observed in the former verse. *I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, that is, that it was his purpose to let them show what they were.*

2. That which should mainly take up the hearts of the Lords People, while they consider His Dispensation of suffering Wicked Men to have power and Authority, and Innocency to be oppressed, and justice perverted by them, is, the Lords intention and purpose therein, so far as by the light of His Word and Spirit they may attain to the knowledge of it: This when it is seen being able to quiet their hearts seeing all His purposes are to bring Glory to himself *Prov. 16. 4.* And good to His Own at last *Psal. 25. 10.* For upon this design of God in suffering men to sit in Judgment seats, who act unjustly there, is *Solomons* meditation Exercised, and therewith also is his heart quieted. *I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God manifest them.*

3. Though the Wickedness of Men, especially Men in place and power, ought to be grievous to the Godly, as it is the Lords publick Dishonour, *Psal. 119. 158.* Yet the manifestation of their Wickedness, and Injustice, as it is ordered and made use of by His holy Providence, to make them more hateful, and to undeceive others who have been ensnared by them, and may possibly tend to make them vile to themselves and ashamed of their evil ways, it ought to be a comfort to the Godly against their own particular sufferings from them; For the consideration of this, That the Lords design in suffering such men to have power, who do abuse it, is to manifest their Brutishness to the World and themselves, is here held forth as comfortable to the oppressed Godly. *I said in my heart concerning*

the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them &c.

4. However Wicked Men in Eminency are apt to Deifie themselves *Dan. 6. 9.* And people also are ready to applaud them in so doing *Ast. 12. 22.* yet while they abuse their power and Authority for promoting of Wickedness, and bearing down of Piety, and Equity, they prove themselves to be Brutish, seeing they seek no higher Happiness than in things wherein Beasts take pleasure *2 Pet. 2. 12.* they wax wanton, and insolent against God by their Prosperity, as the Beast fed upon a fat Pasture; *Deut. 32. 15.* and employ their power to oppress the innocent and weak, as the Beasts do *Ezek. 34. 20. 21.* And so by all their pleasures and prosperity, are but fatted for the day of slaughter *Prov. 7. 22.* For it is here implied, that if they Judged aright. they would esteem themselves no better, seeing it is the Lords mind *To manifest them, And that they might see themselves to be but Beasts.*

5. Wicked men by Reason of their blindness, self love, and prejudice at the truth of God do not ordinarily see the brutishness of their own disposition, and baleness of their way, till they be left of God to manifest to the World the latent Wickedness that is in their hearts: For this second Branch of this Lords design in suffering Wicked Men to have power who abuse it, may be looked on as promoted by the first. They are by providence brought to Eminency, that they may be manifested to others, And this is done that they themselves might see that they are Beasts.

6. Wicked Men may see that, in the Dispensations of God even these that are most grievous to them, may contribute much for their good, if they make a right use thereof: For while he is manifesting them to the World, they ought to think that it is done, *that they may see themselves to be Beasts,* and so may loath themselves, and thank him that they are not destroyed but preserved that they may seek Mercy, and a change of their nature.

7. What ever is discovered to be the Lords intention and aim in His Dispensations, His people ought to concur therewith, by their serious desires, and wishes that it may be brought about, thereby testifying their approbation of His purpose, as Holy and Good; For this may be also taken for *Solomons* hearty Wish, and the worst he desired to befall these Wicked men, *That God might manifest them, and they might see themselves to be Beasts.*

8. The consideration of those many Resemblances that are between Man and the Beast, As 1. That many Events, or occurrences depriving them equally of the satisfaction and pleasure they take in sensual delights, are common to both. 2. That Death is alike certain to both. 3. That the breath, or natural Life of both, is alike easily cut off: And that in all these and the like respects, Man hath no preeminency above the Beasts; The consideration of these I say should in Reason powerfully convince Men of their Brutishness in seeking Happiness in such things, as are in some sort common to them with Beasts, such as, The bearing down of others inferior to them, The satisfying of their sensual appetite, and the like: For, these Resemblances are here reckoned out by *Solomon*, as so many Arguments to convince Man of his Brutishness, in thinking himself Happy for his power and place in the World, without fellowship with God, and living in his fear and Obedience, *For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth the Beasts &c.*

9. They that would deal effectually for convincing sinners of the evil of their way, would make use of such motives, as probably may most prevail with them, though these be not such as are of themselves the most cogent; For *Solomon* here, being to convince Men in power, abusing the same, of their Brutish and Beastly disposition, doth not specify the Resemblances which may from Scripture be condescended upon, between the inward disposition and carriage of the one and the other, but only compares them as to outward Events, and

the issue of their Bodily condition, wherewith such Men are supposed to be only taken up, and so are probably most powerful to dissuade them from seeking Happiness in things common to them with Beasts, *That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth the Beasts, &c.*

10. Scripture Expressions are not always to be looked upon a part, and separat from the Scope of the place where they are; else Mens corrupt hearts, will father many absurd and impious things upon the Scripture contradictory to it self; For, this, that *man hath no preeminency above a Beast*, taken without respect to the Scope and matter in hand, favours of Atheism, and agrees not with the following truth, that *Man hath the preeminency of a reasonable Soul, above the Beast*, but taken with Reference to the Resemblances here mentioned, that *Man* is neither excemed from several outward Events, nor from death it self, it hath a clear truth in it, *Man hath no preeminence* in these, and such as these above the Beast.

11. When the emptiness of all created things, and humane endeavours about them, in regard of any true contentment they can afford to a mans Spirit, and their insufficiency to make him truly Happy, is seen, and well pondered, Man will easily assent to this truth, that they are really Brutish who seek their Happiness in those things, and choose them for their best Portion, which have no proportion to their immortal Souls; For, as a clear proof that they are beasts who so seek their Happiness, this general assertion is brought in, *For all is Vanity.*

12. Men as well as other living Creatures inferior to them, are in a continual motion toward Death, nor can they halt in that course, which should be considered by them, who are also passing toward Eternal Destruction, that their hearts may be weaned from seeking Happiness in these things, from which they are so quickly passing. For, this Word in the Original in the present time, notes a continual motion, and goes thus
13. The

13. The Lord did choise a part of the basest matter in the universe, whereof to form the Bodies of Men, as well as of Beasts, not only to commend His Wisdom and Power, in making such a curious piece of Work as Mans Body, out of such indisposed matter as Dust, but likewise to keep Man humble considering the baseness of his Original, to dissuade him from oppressing others inferior to himself in Worldly respects, seeing he is made of the same mettall with them, and to remind him of a necessity of going to the dust again with them; For which causes mainly, it is here asserted, *all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.*

Ver. 21. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?*

Solomon having shown such Resemblances between Man and the Beast, as may serve to dissuade Man from satisfying himself with the Beasts Happiness, and may prove him very Brutish if he do; he comes now to show wherein Man hath the preeminency, and this is mainly in respect of his *spirit, which goes upward*. Whereby is chiefly meant the Immortality of Mans Soul; seeing he speaks of the state of it, after the Body is gone to the Dust, as is clear by the Words immediately preceding, and by the parallel place *Eccles. 12. 7.* And though the expression seems mainly to respect the Souls of the Godly, that by *Ascending Ascend* (as the Original bears) yet may it be taken in Reference to the Souls of the Wicked also; Not as if they went up to Heaven, but in so far as after Death, they must sit themselves before their Maker and Judge, to be disposed of according to His pleasure, Who though He be every where present, yet it is often set forth in Scripture as above us in the highest Heaven: And because the spirits of the Godly do really by *Ascending Ascend* (as a spark of fire riseth upward) toward Him who is in the high and Holy place, so for the Spirit of the Beasts, which is nothing else but their

Breath, as the Word often signifies, their vital or Animal Powers, it is said to go downward, not as if it did subsist, or remain after it leaves the body, but having spoken of the going downward of the Body, and the perishing of it, he is directed to set forth the perishing of their Spirits, such as they are, by their going downward in opposition to the substance and Elevation of the Spirits of Men, which he sets forth by their going upward; And this difference between the Spirit of Man and Beast, he sets forth in a Question, *Who knows the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit &c.*

Not as if he doubted if it were so, or as if it could not be known; For such Questions in Scripture are used of such things as may be, and are by some certainly known, though considered by few, *Psal. 90. 11.* And so by the Question he registers Mens Ignorance of this truth, and that few do seriously consider it, which is both another evidence of their Brutishness, that they consider the future state of their Souls as little as the Beasts do, and likewise one chief cause, why they provide so little for it.

Hence Learn. 1. The Spirits of Men are Immortal, and after separation from the Body have a subsistence; For, having told that Mens Bodies return to the Dust, as the Beasts do, he speaks of their Spirits, as yet existing, and moving upward, *who knows the spirit of man that goes upward.*

2. God who is the Father of Spirits *Heb. 12. 9.* in regard He doth create and immediatly infuse them into the Body *Zech. 12. 1.* And orders all their motions while they Act therein *Prov. 21. 1.* Hath also the absolute dominion and disposal of them at His pleasure, after their separation from the Body and they must list themselves immediatly before Him, to be disposed of as He shall think fit; For which cause it is that the Spirits of good and bad are said to go upward.

3. As there are but few of those who have Immortal Souls within them, and so have power to reflect upon them, that

never do seriously consider either the nature or future estate of their Souls, or the necessity of their appearance before the Judge; so their not considering hereof, is both an evidence of their Brutishness, and the cause why they chuse not things of a higher nature for their Happiness, than Beasts take pleasure in. And why they carrie one toward another, as Beasts do, by their oppression, for this question imports the thing known or considered by few, and the same to be the evidence of mens Brutishness, and oppression, *who knows the spirit of man that goeth upward.*

4. It is the consideration of the Immortality of the Soul, of the Lords Dominion over it, and especially of the joyfull motion of the Souls of the Godly at death, toward God, and Blessedness with Him, that draws men to live in the fear of God, and makes them affraid to hazard the loss of their Souls, by provocking Him to whom they must go to be disposed of as he pleases; For, as a mean to restrain men from these wicked courses formerly spoken of, he here leads them to thoughts of this, *That their spirits go upward.*

5. Mens ignorance, and inconsideration of the nature and future estate of their own Souls, is a thing to be sadly regrated by them that know and consider the same; They cannot but pity such, and bewail so great an evil, as the cause of many others; For, so doth the Wise-man here sadly regrate mens Ignorance and Inconsideration of this, *Who knows the spirit of man that go's upward.*

6. The Beasts are not made for any further, or higher end, than to be useful and servicable to Man, in serving his Maker, to which man should be engaged by the consideration of his preeminency above the Beasts, and of the service he hath of them, after which there is no more of them; For when that is done *The spirit of the Beast goeth downward, or goes to nothing,* as their Bodies,

7. Men may go to their Beasts, and learn that which may be useful

useful for their Souls, and should be minded by them not to choise sensual pleasures for their Happines, seeing there is a difference between the future state of the one and the other
The spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of the Beest downward

Ver. 22. *Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoyce in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*

FROM the former considerations, of the Lords fixing a season for all Dispensations, the certainty of His Judging Mens Injustice, the Immortality of the soul, and the like; The Preacher draws a Conclusion which he saw did very clearly follow therefrom, *viz.* That the highest Happines attainable in this Life, is to be had in a cheerful following of Duty to God, under all the changes of His Dispensations formerly mentioned; For by a Mans *own mark* wherein he *should rejoyce*, cannot be meant any thing in it self sinful, though that be most properly a Mans own Work, nor any Action of Man, never so lawful, being done in his own natural strength, and not referred to a higher end than the attaining of an earthly Happines; seeing the Scripture expressly condemns Rejoycing in such things *Jan. 4. 16.* and *Solomon* had before proven the same to be Vanity and Madnes, *Eccles. 2. 10. 21.* But by his *own Work* is here meant, a mans proper industry and pains in following the Duties of his general and particular Calling, as means for attaining to that Happines which God allows upon him in this life; and that whereby he may honour God in his Generation, and these are called his *own Works*; Not because they are done in his own strength, or for his own pleasure, Glory or profit, but because these only are the Works suitable to Men who have Reasonable and Immortal Souls, and mainly because the renewed faculties of the Soul, are the immediat Actors of them;

them; And so consequently this rejoicing in a Mans own Work, is not to be understood in opposition to Rejoicing in the Lord, but to Rejoicing in what is sinful, or unsuitable for Reasonable Creatures, and marring the comfortable use of what they have thorow the Blessing of God, upon their own industry and pains, attained unto, and their chearful following of their Duty to Him, which is here commended. And this he presseth by Two Reasons, *First*, That this is a Mans Portion; Which is not to be understood as if this were the furthest or sweetest that man hath to expect, seeing that never entered into his heart, 1 Cor. 2. 9. But as it is the Lords allowance to Man, a temporary reward of his Labour, and the best recompence of his pains that he is capable of in this World. The *Second* is, That when a Man shall (as of necessity he must, which is implied here) leave all behind him, there is no possibility of his returning to see, or (as the Word may be rendered) to Enjoy, any of these outward Comforts, which is the force of this Question; and therefore it is his best to use all, as encouragements to a chearful following of his Duty to God.

From this we may Learn 1. That all the Exercises of Mens wit, in the discourses of their mind, and meditation upon the Lords Dispensations, ought alwayes to resolve in some practical Conclusion, for engagging their hearts to such Exercises of Piety and Holiness, as many honour the Lord; and to chearfulness in going about these, else our contemplations and discourses, though never so clear and satisfactory, are vain and fruitless, in order to the promoting of our True Happiness: For, here *Solomon* from his former Observations, which he had painfully gathered by much meditation, for clearing of his own and others minds, concerning the Lords Dispensations, draweth this practical conclusion, whereby he commends to his own heart and others, a chearful going about of Commanded Duties for the honour of God. *Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better &c.*

2. Although

2. Although the best Actions, that the best of Men can perform, have in them a sinful mixture, and so yeild alwayes some matter of shame and Humiliation *Isa. 64. 6.* Yet it is possible for a Child of God to attain to such a way of going about his Duty, as that he may have Joy and comfort in what he does; so far as he finds the spirit of God inabling him for these Duties, which are far above the reach of his natural Abilities, and so His Works evidence the spirits Gracious Indwelling; *Ephes. 3. 16.* In so far as he is made to intend mainly the Glory of his Maker in his works, and so hath it made clear to him, that he and his Works are acceptable, *1 Pet. 2, 5.* and *4. 11.* This is both the Lords allowance to His Own, and it is there Duty to study the attaining of it; For this is it which is here commended, *That a man should rejoyce in his Works &c.*

3. Though none are to rest upon any measure of Grace, or comfort they have attained in this World, *Philip. 3. 12. 13.* Yet when the Lords people are by His Grace holden to their Duty with some measure of chearfulness, they ought then to Judge themselves arrived at the hight of that Happiness, which for the kind of it, is attainable in this life; seeing they may be sure in that way to have many a comfortable meeting with God to strengthen them for more Work, and increase their Joy in Himself, *Isa. 64. 5.* and in that way they are to hold on, and not to look for rest from that Labour, while they are here; For in this sense *There is nothing better for a man (in this Life) than that he should rejoyce in his own work.*

4. Although the good Motions and Actions of the Godly are to be attributed to the Lord, as the prime efficient of them; *Philip. 2. 13. Isa. 26. 12.* Yet in regard the renewed faculties of the Soul, and the outward man sanctified for that end, are the immediat and formall Causes, and instruments of these Works and that they are no less rewarded by Grace, than if they were done by mans own strength, yet they are properly called mens own Works: And to call them so, and Rejoyce in them also in the

the sense formerly mentioned is consonant to the Scripture, Gal. 6. 4. Which refutes them who say Gracious Actings are not the Believers but Christs, and His Spirits in them. *There is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works.*

5. Although the full reward of Well-doing be reserved for the other Life; yet there is some portion, or part of it (as the Word signifies) *let out* in the mean time; so much as may make Men hold chearfully on in their duty under the saddest Dispensations they may meet with, even that Joy in the Holy Ghost, and Peace that passeth Understanding, from their discerning of the Lords enabling them to follow their duty, and of His acceptance of them and it: For, saith Solomon, *That a man should rejoice in his labour, this is his portion*, That is, It is a begun-Reward, a temporarie Recompence of his Labour and Pains.

6. Though Man had never so large a measure of the Things of this Earth, he should never esteem himself to have got his Portion which God allows upon him, till he find himself enabled by special Grace, to go about his duty, in the strength, and for the Glory of Christ, and so as he may have some measure of true Joy in confidence of the acceptation of his Person and Works; and he that hath attained to this, were his measure of things worldly never so small, he should count himself to have his Portion, which is better than all other things on Earth: For, *That a man should rejoice in his works, this* (saith the wise Man) *is his portion.*

7. While Men are strangers to this chearful following of their duty, which is truly their portion here; they will be no less anxious, and earnest in pursuing things earthly, and heaping them up for the future, than if they were either never to part with them, or after Death to come back again, and enjoy them. For this Question speaks to Men whose practice is such as if they were led by this Principle, that they should return to see, or (as the Word signifies) to enjoy what they once left

behind them at Death, *Who can bring him to see what shall be after him?*

8. The Consideration of Mans short continuance with, and the certainty of his parting from all his earthly Comforts, and of the impossibility of his returning to them after Death; should not make him abuse them by excess of delight in them, as sensual Epicures do, 1 Cor. 15. 32. yet it should stirr him up to take his allowed Comfort in them, and to use them for chearing of his Heart in serving of his Maker, so shall he be Sure his Works shall follow him when he rests from his labour, though he come not back to see or enjoy them here: For there is an Argument to commend chearful following of a Mans duty, by taking the comfort of the Creatures, imported in this Question, *For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?*

CHAP. IV.

THE ARGUMENT.

SOLOMON in this Chapter goeth on in pressing that great Work, and Exercise of a Christian Mortification to the World, thereby drawing off Mens Hearts from the pursuit of an earthly Happiness, and encouraging them to a conscientious Submission under the greatest pressure of outward Troubles, which he enforces by several Motives, or Arguments, being so many of his own Experimental Observations.

The 1. whereof is, That in his renewed and serious Consideration of things, he found is ordinary in the World, that proud and wicked Oppressors prevailed and were very prosperous: And that the Saints were kept in a very sad and comfortless

lest Life under them. ver. 1. which made him not only commend the state of them who by Death were beyond the reach of such Miseries and Snarers, as preferable to the state of them who by their life were yet exposed to them, ver. 2. But also to prefer the case of them that are yet unborn, who have neither seen, nor felt these Troubles and Temptations, unto both the Dead that once were, and the Living that yet are under them, ver. 3.

2. That the best Entertainment that Mens diligence in following that which is good, doth ordinarily meet with in the World (though it may be some expect better) is Hatred and Envy, even from those, from whom, in regard of their Obligation and Relation, it would be least expected; which he censures as a sinful Vanity in the Envyers, and a penal Vanity of Disappointment and Unsatisfaction in the Envied, and a thing that will work vexation of Spirit in both; while the one hath his Spirit eaten up with Hatred, and the other missing that encouragement he expects from Men, to the following of his duty, and not satisfied with the Approbation of God, is filled with Anxiety and Vexation, ver. 4. Which he enlargeth by shewing, 1. What effect the Worlds Envy and Hatred against Well-doing, had upon those, who being void of Saving Knowledge & the true Fear of God, are by the Spirit of God reckoned Fools, even to make them give up themselves to negligence & discouragement in following both their particular Callings, & Religious Duties, rather than to be exposed unto the Worlds Hatred and Envy by following the same: Thereby proving cruel to themselves and their Relations, as if they did eat their own Flesh, ver. 5. And 2. The more to quiet the Hearts of the Godly under the Malice and Oppression of the Wicked for Well-doing, he sheweth that the little that is left to the oppressed Saints is more profitable and useful in regard of the Blessing and Peace of Conscience they have with it; than the Plenty and Abundance enjoyed by their wicked Oppressours, who want neither Toil of Body, nor Anxiety of Spirit, in getting and keeping their unjust Gain, ver. 6.

3. That in turning his thoughts from the slothful Man, to the covetous Oppressour, whose great business is to heap up Riches and adore them as his God, he found that even such are but in a woful and miserable condition, ver. 7. Which he evidenceth, 1. By a description of the covetous Man who serveth Mammon as his God. 1. From his Solitariness, or want of Succession, either in a direct, or collateral line to enjoy his purchase after him, ver. 8. 2. From his endless and excessive pains about the World, notwithstanding of his wanting Relations to whom he might leave it ver. 8. 3. From his unquenchable desires after more, notwithstanding the abundance he enjoyeth ver. 8. And 4. From his being bound up by his excessive care about the World, from the improvement of these rational Considerations, that might serve to divert his so eager a Pursuit after uncertain Riches, never considering with himself the uncertainty for whom he is taking so much pains, and the grievous Loss of the true good of his Soul, fellowship with God, and the comfortable enjoyment of the Creatures, which by this inordinate Pursuit of the World he certainly sustains. ver. 8. And then passeth Sentence upon such a Mans way, that as it is his Sin and a Proof of his Vanity, so it

is his punishment, and a part of his sore Travel ver. 8. And 2. He evidenceth the woful condition of the solitary covetous Wretch, by commending the comfort and advantage of Society, (whether Civil, or (and especially) Religious) through which mutual good and assistance are communicated: And that, in opposition to that affected or insisted solitariness of these World-worshippers, whereby none are admitted to share with them in their Riches.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. I. *So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are under the Sun: And behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no Comforter; and on the side of their Oppressours there was power, but they had no Comforter.*

THE first Motive serving to promote Mortification, and to wean the hearts of Men from any Happiness imaginable in this Earth, and work them to submission under Affliction, is, That he observed it ordinary in the World, that proud Oppressours are prosperous, and the Godly are in a sad condition under them: And this he saith he *Returned and Considered*: Whereby is meant, that he turned his thoughts again upon this subject; having in the former Chapter ver. 16. considered that oppression that was in Judgment Seats, he here views all other sorts of oppression, that were under the Sun, so far as his knowledge and information, (which was very large) could reach; or rather that he had all the several kinds of oppressions, which are very many, and whereof no place under the Sun, where sinful Men are, is free, represented to him by the Spirit of the Lord. Concerning which

which he calls all to consider *Three* things that much affect his own heart; *First*, The mournful case of the oppressed, set out by the sign thereof, their *Tears*. *Secondly*, The great power of their Oppressours, wanting nothing that might serve for execution of their cruel designs. *Thirdly*, That the Oppressed had no Comforter, to wit, among Men; And because this was the bitterest Ingredient in this case, and called most for sympathie; therefore he repeats it twice that *They had no Comforter*.

Hence Learn 1. They that would work their own hearts, to a mortified frame, must not be slight and superficial in meditating upon any subject, that may be blest for that end, but frequent and serious in pondering it, and careful to find out more Considerations that may increase the same: For, *Solomon* having been upon this Consideration before, returns again to it, and dyves farther in it, *I returned and considered all the oppressions, &c.*

2. As Oppression is a very general Evil, in so much as no place under the Sun, is usually free of it: So this Sin is a Monster with many Heads; and there are very many ways that Men become guilty of it; not onely by making their power a sufficient Title to other Mens Estates, *Ezek. 18. 18. Judg. 4. 2, 3.* By perverting of Justice and Law for Bribes; or Respect to Persons; *Hos. 5. 11.* Or by detaining that which is due to Inferiours, as Wages from the Hirling *Mal. 3. 3.* Which are the more open and gross ways of Oppression, ordinary among Men; But also by taking advantage of the straits of others, to draw their Consent to what is unjust, and prejudicial to them, as is ordinary under pretence of fair Merchandice. *Lev. 25. 14.* Blasting the deserved esteem of others by Slanders. *Pf. 55. 3.* Yea, and the with-holding of Charity from the Poor, when God calls for it *Prov. 14. 31.* All which the Scriptures cited make clear to be in Gods Account, *plain Oppression*, and undoubtedly have been Considered by *Solomon*, as common in all.

all places of the World, while he saith, *I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the Sun.*

3. As the Lords People are not insensible of the Injuries they receive from their Oppressours, seing Grace doth not remove, but rectify their natural Passions, and Affections: So they are often that low, that they have nothing left them whereby to ease their hearts, but to mourn before God, and to pour forth Prayers and Tears to Him, who puts their Tears in His Bottle: For, *Solomon* hath a main Eye upon the Oppression of the Godly, while he saith, *And behold the Tears of the Oppressed.* As if they had no more that they could do for their ease.

4. Although the Lords People do never want that Blessed Comforter *Job*. 14. 16. Who is in a special way present with them, while they are Oppressed, and suffering for Righteousness sake 1 *Pet.* 4. 14. Yet in their sad condition they have often few or none among Men to be comfortable to them; even of these whose Relations, and Ingements tye them most strictly thereunto; Which flows from the want of the Fear of the Lord, that puts Man to these Duties which Mans Law presseth not, *Job* 6. 14. Such as this is of sympathie and fellow-feeling, and the expressions thereof; and from the fear of Oppressours, least respect to the Oppressed may bring themselves to their condition, 1 *Sam.* 23. 11, 12. And likewise from the Lords Gracious purpose to try His own compleatly, and make them seek after, and set a great value upon Divine Consolations: For to the mourning *Oppressed*, there was no Comforter, to wit, among Men.

5. It is not only the duty of these that are Fellow-sufferers, to sympathize with, and be comfortable to one another; but also, and especially of those who are in Tranquillity, to sympathize with these that are under Oppression, and incite others to do the same: For, *Solomon* who was in much prosperity, the most part of his time, and while he was writting this Book

Ecclesi.

Eccles. 2. 25. speaks here as a tender hearted Sympathizer with the Oppressed, and calls upon others to look on them with pity, and to be comfortable to them, while he saith, *Behold the tears of the oppressed, and they had no Comforter, and again, They had no Comforter.*

6. The Lord is pleased not only to suffer cruel Oppressours, to have external force at their Command, and abundance of Furniture for accomplishing their cruel Designs; but likewise to have strength of Body, and vigour of natural Spirits, for that end, until His Work about His People be perfected by them, and the Cup of their Iniquity be full: For, all these are in the signification of this Word *Power*, which he saith *Is on the side*, or, in the hand, as that other Word is, of their Oppressours, *And upon the part of their Oppressours was Power.*

7. The consideration of all the Oppressions, and Power of Oppressours under the Sun, and the sad and comfortless case of the Oppressed, which is the ordinary lot of the Church, ought to wean Mens hearts from this Earth, make them die to the delights thereof, and banish the apprehension of finding Happiness in it, where such usage is ordinary, and make them long for that Morning when they shall have dominion over their Oppressours, *Pf. 49. 14.* For that Country where Righteousness only dwells, *2 Pet. 3. 13.* For the New Heavens where all Tears shall be wiped from their Eyes, *Rev. 7. 17. 21, 4.* And for the heavenly Canaan where none of a cursed kind can be: For in order to these ends, *Solomon* describes the ordinary Tragedies that are acted upon the Stage of this World, to alienate Mens hearts from the imagination of Happiness in it. *I considered all the oppressions under the sun, and behold the tears of the Oppressed &c.*

Verse II. *Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive.*

III. *Yea, better is he than both they which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the Sun.*

THE Preacher here shews what effects the consideration of those grievous Oppressions mentioned in the former Words, had upon him: As 1. That he commended the state of them who have by Death escaped the sight of such Dishonour to God, and the feeling of such Miseries, as much to be preferred to their state who are pyning away under them, and exposed to manifold Temptations, of whom no better can be said than that they live, and that is *All*. Yea, 2. He preferred the state of him who is not yet born, both to the state of them who have wrestled thorow these Miseries, and them that are yet in their passage, because such a one hath not seen, or as the force of the Word is, *hath not felt the miseries*, nor been exposed to the Temptations that are in this World. This seems to be the literal and safest sense of the Words; and according to it, these Objections which may arise from the Expressions may be easily answered: As 1. If it be enquired, How doth *Solomon's* praising of the Dead more than the Living agree with the Saints praising of the Living more than the Dead, *Isai.* 38. 18, 19, *Psa.* 6. 5.? The Answer is, In these places the state of the Dead as wanting opportunity of Praising and Glorifying God, is compared with the state of the Living who have it, and so this is preferred to that. Here the state of the Dead considered as setting man above the reach of temporal Miseries and Temptations, is compared with the state of the Living exposing them to both, and so the preference may be contrary. And 2. If it be again urged, how can the state of him that is not yet born, be preferred to the state of those that are Dead, seeing the Godly that

that are in Blessings have escaped these Miseries and Temptations, which he thinks to be born in to be exercised with? The Answer is the same in substance, that he compares the state of not being at all, with the state of being Miserable, and exposed to Temptations, abstracting as it were from the future and eternal state of Men, that thereby he may express the holy Indignation, and Grief he had at the sight of Gods dishonour, and His Peoples Misery.

Doct. 1. Although it cannot consist with right Reason, much less with true Piety, to desire Death or undervalue Life, because of the Miseries incident to it, being a rational Life is one of the greatest of men outward Blessings, whereunto all the rest are subservient; *Mat. 6. 25.* and which may compensate by the worth, and good use which may be made of it, all the Miseries incident to it. *Lev. 2. 39.* yet in order to the escaping of these great Evils, the sight of God's Dishonour, and His Peoples Misery, the hazard of being assaulted and overcome with these Temptations which are worse than Death, and in order to the obtaining of perfect freedom, not only from Misery, but from Sin and Temptations, and of the full enjoyment of God's presence, *Phil. 1. 23.* Natural Life may be safely undervalued, and Death praised, and preferred to it; In which sense we may safely conceive Solomon here to speak thus, *Wherefore I praised the Dead which are already Dead, more than the Living, &c.*

2. Mans life for the most part in regard of the Miseries incident to it, and the sad Spectacles that are in it, is but a beggar Death; a languishing and pining away, a continual motion toward Death, so should living men look upon themselves, that they may mind the certainty of Death, and prepare for it; For Solomon so compares the Dead and the Living, as if the Living were a Dying, *I praised the Dead who are already Dead, more than the Living who are yet alive;* And that is all.

3. The Lord doth wisely make use of sad Dispensations to loole mens hearts, from the too great esteem they have of their natural Life, and being in this World; And to allay the abhorrency they have at Death, which should make the Lords people submissive to such Dispensations, and labour to find this effect thereof upon themselves, which Solomon here expresses to have been produced upon him by them, *Wherefore I praised the Dead which are already Dead, more than the Living &c.*

4. So tender are truly Gracious Hearts of Gods Honour, and so desirous to see the rest of His people well in the World, that (with submission to His good will) they could forfeit their natural Life, and all the comforts of it, rather than see Him dishonoured, and His people in Misery. For, such a frame of spirit may this expresse to us, produced in Solomon by the former sad sights, *I praised the Dead &c. Yea better is he that is not yet Born &c.*

5. No Being at all is in reason much to be preferred to a Being in sin and Misery: see *Mark 26. 24*. For, it is simple not Being at all, that Solomon compares with and prefers to a Being expoted to Miserie and Temptations occasioned thereby, while he saith, *Yea better is he that is not Born than both they, who hath not seen the evil Work that is done under the Sun.*

Ver. 4. Again I considered all travel, and every Right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour: this is also Vanity, and Vexation of Spirit.

Here is the second Observation which Solomon holds forth to wean mens hearts from seeking Happiness in this Earth. And it is upon the entertainment that mens industry and pains in well doing, doth ordinarily meet with in the World, and the effect which that Entertainment hath ordinarily upon men, *Again (saith he) I considered all travel, and every Right work, &c.* By these he doth not mean any different sub-
jects

jects which he took to consideration, but one, and the same, to wit, that toilsome Labour, or painful Industrie (as the Word *Travel* signifies) which men take about that which is Right or Approven, as the Word signifies, to wit, in Gods sight. And this appears by his speaking of both as one, while he expresseth what Entertainment this sort of work hath in the World, For *This* (saith he) *a man is envied*; The better a mans actions be, the more is he hated by them that cannot do the like, even by his most intimat familiar Friend; as the Word *Neighbour* signifies. And this he Censureth as Vanity, both a sinful Vanity upon the part of the envious, who are grieved at what they ought to rejoyce in, to wit, others well-doing, and likewise a disappointing unsatisfying Vanity upon the part of the envied, who often look for other Entertainment to their *Right Works*. And then he shewes what is the ordinary effect which this bad Entertainment of good Actions hath upon men; it eats up with anxiety the Spirits, especially of those who cannot comfort themselves in Gods approbation against mens envy: And seeing all men in the World are subject to this Vanity, either to envy others for doing well, or being envied by others for well-doing, to vex their own Spirits, it is mans wisdom to seek his Happiness elsewhere.

Hence Learn. 1. There is so much opposition from without, and so much indisposition within every man to what is right, and approven in Gods sight, that a man may expect his duty, and every part of it shall cost him some toil, and pains of Body, and mind, so that he will not get his heart engaged to it, nor holden on in it, except the love of Christ constrain him, 1 Cor. 5. 14. For, this Word, which expresses the quality of a *Right Work*, signifies toilsome and painful labour, *I considered all Travel and every Right work.*

2. Only these Works are *Right*, and (as the Word signifies) *Approven*, to wit, in Gods sight, which are sincerely intended to be conform to the *Right* rule; the revealed mind of

God, *Psal.* 119. 128. which are gone about with dependance upon God for strength, and direction *Prov.* 3. 6. and with a single and direct aim at the Glory and pleasure of God in the doing of them; *Prov.* 4. 27. For all these, which do at least in part, describe a *Right Work*, are in the signification of the Word translated *Right*, as the places cited where the same word is used, make clear, *I conspired every Right Work.*

3. The uprightness of mens Actions, will be so far from giving them the approbation and applause of the wicked World, that by the contrary, it may be expected, that men shall be (because of this) the object of their Envy, who mind Gods Glory so little, and are so greedy of vain Glory to themselves, that they are grieved to see others made instrumental in Glorifying him; *John* 3. 26. 27. For, while Solomon considers every Right Work, he findes, *that for this a man is envied of his neighbours*.

4. Envy is such an evil, as not only makes men grieve at the good of Strangers and Enemies, but it vents it self mainly against a mans own Companions or Equals, as being most suspicious that those intercept the applause which the envious hunt after; For, so saith Solomon here, *For this, to wit, a Right work, a man is envied of his neighbours*. The Word signifies mans Equal, his intimate familiar Friend, and Companion.

5. As it is the sin of men, and a proof that they are infected with that Vanity which the Fall hath brought upon Mankind, to envy others for their good Actions, so it is a just punishment inflicted upon those, who look for mens applause, and approbation, as their great Encouragement in their work, that they should meet with disappointment herein, and with mens envy as a hind of their applause; For, this sentence of Solomon past upon the envying of *Right Works*, may be both taken ab initio the sin of the enviers, and next is the disappointment, and so the punishment of the envied, who expected their approbation as their reward; For, *the envy of many*.

Men do naturally overvalue the applause of others; and study so little to draw their Encouragement from Gods approbation, that when they meet with envy instead of applause which they expected, their Spirits are ready to be eaten up with Anxiety. For, *This is mine Right, which should be charged upon my Anger.* This, saith Solomon proves not only Envy, or disappointment of his expectation, but also *Excitation of Spirit.*

Ver. 17. *The Fool foldeth his hands together, and saith, hand down upon me, because I have done no work.*

6. *But is an handful with quivers; than both the hands full with travel, and excitation of Spirit.*

Solomon having shewn that *Well-doing* is ordinarily Entertained with the Worlds Envy; and that the ordinary effect of the discerning hereof, is the *Excitation of mens Spirit*; He doth here shew, First, a further effect which the same hath upon these that are void of the living knowledge, and fear of the Lord, who are ordinarily in *Sinners* Writings, set forth by the name of *Fools*, so wit, That they give up themselves to Idleness, and rather compose themselves to do nothing, than expose themselves to the Worlds Envy; and this is set forth by the *folding of the hands*, Whereby is meant, both mens declining of the Duties of their Ordinary Calling, and likewise their *Thaking off* of their pains in Religious Duties, by reason of discouragement; because in stead of the applause they looked for, they meet with mens Envy. For, the Scripture, by this and the like expressions of *Folding*, or, *Suffering the Hands to hang down*, expresseth both Idleness of all sort, and sinful discouragement of Spirit, Prov. 6. 9. 10. *Heb. 12. 12.* Now, we see forth the good consequence of mans

giving up himself to the neglect of his Duty, calling it an *Eating of his own flesh*, which is as much as to say, he proves cruel to himself, and to these whom he should love as his own flesh, an enemy to his own true peace, which he might have by his Activity in his Duty, notwithstanding of the Worlds Envy, and so in effect, is no less cruel to himself than if he did *eat his own flesh*: Ver. 5. *Thirdly*, He gives a farther consideration serving mainly to work contentment under Oppression, to wit, That the Little, left to the oppressed Godly, is much sweeter, and more advantageous, as the Word translated *Better* signifies, seeing it hath the peace of a good conscience with it, than never so much to the Covetous Oppressours, who have no less toil of Body, and Anxiety of Spirit, in keeping and increasing their wealth, than if they had nothing at all; and therefore it is the wisdom of them that would have true Contentment, to hold on in their Duty, notwithstanding of the envy and oppression of the World.

Hence learn. 1. Men void of the saving knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, will not readily abide at their Duty, when they meet with opposition, and discouragement therein from the World, and get not that poor reward of Worldly applause and approbation, which they expected. For, when the Fool seeth this, that for every Right work a man is envied of his neighbour, then he folds his hands together, and sits by idle and discouraged, as the expression imports.

2. He that forsakes his Duty for fear of others Envy, is a Fool in Gods esteem, seeing the Lords approbation, and reward, is sufficiently able to make up all that others Envy can bring upon him; for so doth Solomon design the man who deserts his Duty for others Envy, *The Fool folds his hands together*.

3. Although the Godly may he found sometimes in the posture of Idleness, Security, and Discouragement, as well as the Wicked, yet do they not give up themselves willingly and resolutely to that way, as if it were needless for them to do otherwise,

otherwise, For, it is here given as the proper Character or Description of the Wicked. *The Fool foldeth his hands together.*

4. Albeit the Godly have the Lords assurance for a competency even of things Worldly, *Psal. 84. 11.* Yet it is the Lot they may look for, by reason of the Worlds Envy, and Oppression of them, for following of their Duty, to have but an *Handful*, or a very small portion of things Worldly: For while he commends their allowance, he calls it an *Handful*, and yet it is a *Satisfying Measure*, as the Word is in the Original; They must thank God for one *Handful* after another, and not be vexed though they have but an *Handful*.

5. As true contentment is consistent with a very mean portion in the World, while the same is seen to be from the love of a Father, *Matth 6. 31.* and accompanied with abundance of the *True Riches* *Jam. 2. 5.* So, it is this Contentment, which makes a mean Portion of Worldly things, both sweeter and more profitable, than never so great abundance of the World without it, *Better is an handful with contentment; than both the hands full.* &c.

6. Abundance of the World, even as much as men can hold with *both their Hands*, cannot satisfy them; without peace with God, and their own consciences, they have nothing but toil of Body, and Vexation of Spirit, by their Cares to increase, and Fears to lose, what they have, as is imported here, while it is said, *Better is an handful with Quietness, than both the hands full with Travel* (or, as the Word signifies, *Wearisome and wasting Labour*.) and *Vexation of Spirit*.

Ver. 7. *Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the Sun.*

8. *There is One alone, and there is not a Second: yea he hath neither Child nor Brother; yet is there no end of all his Labour, neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither saith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? this is also vanity, yea it is a sore travel.*

The

THe third consideration serving to draw men from seeking Happiness in things earthly, is concerning the woful case of those who have chosen *Mammon* for their God. And in setting out this, he doth *First* by way of Preface shew, that he bended his thoughts another way, to wit, from the *Slothful* who had given over diligence, to the *Covetous* Wretch, who is all business about the World, and findes his course vain, sinful, and empty of true satisfaction. *Secondly*, he describeth the Covetous. 1. By his Solitariness, he is *One alone*, and there is not a *Second*, without Child, or Brother. He supposes him to have none either by a direct or collateral Line, descending from him, to whom he might leave his substance. Which is not to be understood, as if every Covetous man were so, or, as every One who is thus alone, were Covetous: But the meaning is, that such is the nature of that sin of Covetousness, that he who is under the power of it, though he have none of these Relations, which tie men to diligence in some lawful employment. 2 *Timoth.* 5. 8. he is not the less taken up with his idol *Mammon*. 2. He is described from his boundless, excessive pains, there is no end of all his Labour, to wit, while he hath time, or strength, he doth out of measure, or *insatiably* as the word is translated *Job.* 22. 30. lay out himself in pains about things earthly: 3. From his insatiable desire after more, his Eye is not satisfied. By the Eye is meant the desires of the Soul, 1 *Job.* 2. 16. These are not filled with more than abundance, as the Word *Reber* signifies. 4. From his want of Consideration, and of the right use of Reason. He is so intent upon, and so transported with the love of, his God *Mammon*, that he cannot admit of these Considerations which are most obvious, and might abate his earnestness in pursuing after Riches. As 1. He commanes not with his own heart, for whom he is heaping up his Riches. And 2. He considers not how great a Loser he is by his carriage, depriving himself both of the comfortable use of outward Enjoyments, and of *sweet Communion with God* which is the true Good

Good of the Souls of Men. 2 Pet. 3. 10. And Lastly, he passeth sentence upon this Mans Course, as upon the former, that it is the Man's Sin, or a proof of his Vanity, and it is also a fore Affliction, or a part of his Punishment.

Hence Learn 1. As the vain and sinful Courses which Men take for Happiness in this Earth, are so many and various, that let a diligent Observer turn himself never so often, to what hand he will, he shall always see more and more of them; So those who would promote the Work of Mortification in their own hearts, ought to search them all out, and study the Vanity of one of them after another: For so doth Solomon here, after he hath made many Observations upon the Vanity that Men are subject to, he saith, *I returned again, and saw Vanity under the Sun.*

2. The Lord's publick Messengers must not only point out the Way to true Blessedness, and the Priviledges of those who take themselves to it, but must trace the several ways that Satan and Mens Corruption do put them upon, to their own Misery and Ruine; and in their Doctrine discover the Vanity of these in particular. For so doth Solomon, after he hath before pointed at the Way to true Happiness and Contentment, he goes from one of Mens vain Courses to another, and demonstrates the Vanity thereof, *Then I returned, and saw vanity under the Sun, There is One alone &c.*

3. All the vain and sinful Courses which Men take for Happiness in this Earth, though they lead all to one Black End, yet are they very farr different one from another, some of them being upon one extreme, some upon another; so that Men have no ground to please themselves, if they be out of God's Way, though they be not walking in the Way that others are in, as they are ready to do, Luk. 18. 11. seeing there are more ways to Hell than one or two. For in the former Words Solomon described one Man going to Hell with his hands folded, and doing nothing, here he describes another going the same way.

with great activity, and much business. *There is One alone, &c. and there is no end of his labour.*

4. Although the multitude of those for whom Men are bound to provide, can never warrand their neglect of the main Business that concerns their Souls, *Prov. 31. 26, 30.* Yet the greater Mens charge of that sort be, the more careful and diligent in lawful pains they ought to be, and more than those who have fewer to provide: For while the Sin of the Covetous Man is aggravated by this, that he *hath neither Child nor Brother*, and yet *there is no end of all his labour*, It is imported, that if he had had these Relations, he had been less guilty than now while he *hath neither Child, &c.* and yet *there is no end of all his labour.*

5. When the Lord in His Providence so ordereth, that Men of great Substance, and Riches in the World, have few or none of near Relation to them, to whom they may leave the same, it should much abate their earnestness in the pursuit of these things, and make them bestow more of their time and labour about things Spiritual and Heavenly, and think of imploying their Wealth for the Poor, and other Pious Uses: For he makes it an Aggravation of Man's guilt, that having neither *Child nor Brother*, *there should be no end of his labour.*

6. Though Men be ready to cloak their excessive care, and pains about things worldly, with their love to Posterity, and respect to those of near relation to them; yet the truth is, that excessive Care of theirs, flows not so much from any true love to those, as from the innordinate love of Riches themselves, and so is to be Fathered upon Mens Corruption: For the Spirit of God, to point out that which is natural to all who are not seeking the true Riches, Doth bring in the example of *One alone who hath neither Child, nor Brother*, and yet *there is no end of his labour.*

7. Natural Men who soon weary of any exercise that concerns their Souls good, *Amos 8. 5.* will end their Time, Spi-
rits,

rits, and Strength, before they make an end of their excessive pains for Trifles: For, so saith the Spirit of God here, *There is no end of his labour.*

8. So large is the capacity, and appetite of a rational Soul, and so great emptiness is there in the Creatures, that not only the greatest things they can enjoy, cannot satisfy them, but all that their Eyes can see, cannot do it; how foolish are Men who spend not their labour for that which can satisfy, even the Graces, and Consolations of Gods Spirit? *Pf. 36. 8.* For, while Man seeks other things as his portion, *His Eye is not satisfied with riches.*

9. When Men have given up themselves to the Slavery of any worldly Lust, their thoughts are so taken up with it, that not only the matters of their Souls are neglected, but even these thoughts which are most obvious and common, are banished. For there is nothing more ordinary among Men, than to consider for whom they are taking pains; yet when a Man hath once given up himself to the service of that Idol *Mammon*, he hath not so much leisure, as to say to his own heart, *For whom do I labour?*

10. Although Men that are acquiring and encreasing a great worldly Estate, cannot know certainly who shall be their Heirs; yet it is fit they should seriously consider what sort of persons they are like to prove, who probably will succeed to them, that if they have small ground to think they will improve what they get to advantage, they may abate their pains, or dispose of their purchase some better way. For it is here given as a proof of their Vanity and Folly, that *they say not, for whom do I labour?*

11. As the inordinat love, and earnest pursuit of things worldly, deprives Men of the comfortable use of the Creatures, and of the true good of Communion with God; so the consideration of this their loss, is a powerful mean to abate the eagerness of their love to, and pursuit of these things; as is import-

ed in this consideration (which they neglect) here suggested unto them, *Neither, saith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my Soul of good?*

12. The cause why Men are so mad in the pursuit of worldly things as their Happiness, and for them neglect their Souls, is, that they never retire within themselves as it were, to commune with their own Hearts, and put Questions to their own Consciences, concerning all the fruit of their pains, and the loss they sustain by the same. For, this may be taken for the cause of the Covetous Mans endless labour, *He saith not for whom do I labour, and bereave my Soul of good?*

13. It is both Mens great Guilt, and their sore Affliction, to chioise and pursue earthly things, as their Happiness, and to neglect Righteousness, the true Riches; It not only draws much misery upon Men at the last, but hath the punishment of it, often in its bosome, as is clearly asserted in this censure of that Course, *This is vanity, yea, it is a sore travel.*

Ver. IX. *Two are better than One, because they have a good Reward for their labour.*

X. *For if they fall, the One will lift up his fellow; but wo to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.*

XI. *Again if Two ly together, then they have heat, but how can One be warm alone?*

XII. *And if One prevail against him, Two shall withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

Solomon having described the Covetous Worldling, from his affecting a solitary Life, least any might share of his Riches, wherein he placeth his Happiness: He doth here take occasion to point out and commend the benefit of Society. And though what is here spoken of it, be applicable to any lawful Society, whether Conjugal, Military, or the like;

like; yet considering *Solomon* as preaching to the Church, it cannot but be most safe, and useful, to apply the same to Christian and Religious Society, and what he speaks to the Commendation of it will be the clearer, if we conceive him at the direction of the Spirit of the Lord, making use of the similitudes of Fellow-labourers about one Employment, Fellow-souldiers in one Warfare, and Fellow-travellers in one Journey, as all Christians are.

And *First*, He asserts that Society is to be preferred to Solitariness, while he saith, *Two are better than One.* the meaning whereof is, That two or more concurring about any commanded Duty, are in a better case, they have more comfort and advantage, as the Word (*Better*) signifies, if they improve their Society aright, than either of them could have, being alone.

Next, He giveth Reasons hereof, by setting down particularly, several of the Advantages to be had by Society rightly improved, and some of the Disadvantages of the want of it.

He speaks of the Advantages in the future, as things that will fall out, not as if they would alwayes be found even in the best Societies, but hereby expressing according to the ordinary Language of Scripture, what is Man's Duty, and what one Christian may expect as the benefit of anothers Society, and what will be found when Society is blest, and rightly made use of. The *first* Advantage is, that, *They have a good Reward for their Labour*, whereby is meant, That though their mutual help, and encouraging one of another, their Work hath better success, and so their Reward from Grace shall be greater, than if each of them had been wrestling alone at their Duty, neglecting to take the help of another. The *second* Advantage is, That *if they fall the One will lift up his Fellow*, the meaning is, If Either of them fall into Trouble, or by the power of temptation into any Sin, or Errour, by the Blessing of God upon the right use of Christian Society, the fallen may recover, or if they both should fall (as it is in the Original) their Falls may be

be not alike hurtful, the one may soon recover himself, and help up his Companion. To which Advantage he subjoines the Disadvantage of the want of Christian Society, *Who to him that is alone*, whereby is meant no more, but that he is in a dangerous and sad condition, who, when he falls into Trouble or Sin, hath none to help, or endeavour his recovery, especially if for base and sinful Respects, he have voluntarily chosen to be alone. The *third* Advantage of Society, is held forth under the similitude of two Travellers, who lodge and ly together all night, for the Word translated to *Ly*, is used of Dwelling, *Lev. 26. 6.* and of being Sick, *Pf. 41. 8.* and so seems not to be taken Properly, but Metaphorically, for Cohabitation, or mutual Society, especially in an afflicted Condition. Then by their *having of heat* is meant, their mutual imparting of Comfort and Strength one to another, in their lawful undertakings, especially under Afflictions, and with this he joins the second Disadvantage of the want of Society, *How can One be warm alone?* He means, it will prove a great difficulty for One to have comfort or encouragement in his course, who hath none of the Lords People to assist him. The *fourth* Advantage is, That if any Christian have the worse in his Combat against Temptations, or wrestling thorow Difficulties, he may expect Help, and Victory, by the Blessing of God upon his using of the Society of others. And the *fifth* Advantage, which may be taken for an illustration of the former, set forth in a proverbial speech is, That the joint strength of Christians shall not easily be prevailed against, and so Society may be blest, to prevent the hazard implied in the former Advantage.

Hence Learn 1. Although it be always much better to be *Alone*, than in wicked society, *Pf. 1. 1.* and sometimes better to be *Alone*, than in the society of the best, as when we are called to secret Duties, *Mar. 6. 6.* yet for the comfortable and successful performance of common and weighty Duties, and bearing of great Difficulties, the Society of the Godly is a great Ad-

van-

vantage; The Lord who alone is Self-sufficient, hath not given to any one such a measure of Light or strength, as can put them beyond the necessity of making use of others; but would have every one to seek help from, and every one willing to give help to, others; Therefore is society here commended, *Two are better than One.*

2. As no lawful Employment rightly gone about, shall want its own Reward, which may be lawfully eyed by the Lord's People for their encouragement; so the improving of Christian Society for our furtherance in duty, hath a special Reward, not only after time, but even in this Life. Hereby His People may expect to be sharp'ned, and have an edge put upon them in their Duty, *Prov. 27. 17.* to have encouragements from others against Difficulties, *1 Sam. 23. 16.* and fresh supplies of the Spirit drawn from Heaven to each other, by their mutual Prayers, *Phil. 1. 19.* and so both their work is furthered, and their future Reward ensured; For this is the first Advantage of Christian Society. *They have a good Reward for their labour.*

3. As none of the Children of the Lord are beyond the hazard of falling either into Sin, or sad Afflictions, while they are in their Journey to Heaven; so their Falls, of what sort soever, must not make others of His People desert them, but then especially to prove their Affection to them, by studying to support or restore them. And it is a great Mercy for a Man fallen into Sin or Misery, to have One who will endeavour to *Lift him up again.* For as the hazard of Falling is here imported to be common to all the Lord's People, so the duty of each of them to another is holden out also, *For if they fall the One will lift up his fellow.*

4. Although it be the Lord alone who is the Principal Efficient of preserving his own from falling, and restoring them after their falls *Psal. 145. 14.* Yet he makes use of some of his people as instruments in his hand, to restore others fallen beside them, *For, if they fall, the One will lift up his fellow.*

5. It is mens sense of their being prone to *Fall*, and unable to recover themselves without help, when they fall, which makes them of Uniting and Sociable tempers, as is implied in this advantage commending Christian Society, *if they fall, the One will lif up his fellow.*

6 Although the Children of the Lord are never left all alone, having his presence even under their falls *Heb. 13. 5.* And so cannot but be blest even when they want human help, yet ought they to look upon their being deserted of others of his people, as a great disadvantage. For to them especially is this here spoken, that thereby they may be stirred up to make sure his favourable presence with them, and make use of the help of others when they may have it, *Woe to him that is alone.*

7. It is a *Woe* indeed, and a sad Judgement upon wicked men, to be left alone under their falls, when they have rejected profitable Society in the day of their prosperity, or carried themselves so basely, that the Godly abhor their Company, or provoked the Lord not only to leave them destitute of his own presence, but to take away from others, all pity toward them: for of them especially is this verified, *Woe to him that is alone &c.*

8. The Children of the Lord should so entertain his Spirit, and labour to have his Graces, Love, Fear and the like, in such vigour in their hearts, even under the sadest condition they can be in, that they may impart heat and warmth unto others: for it is here implied that if they be together, they should warm one another, *if Two lye together, then they have heat.*

9. Although the Lord may, and ordinarily doth quicken the hearts of his people, by keeping his Graces lively in them, and giving them much comfort in their solitary and afflicting condition, which he carves out for their Exercise and Trial *Psal. 63. 1. 3.* Yet if they neglect to make use of Christian Society, when they have it, and when he allows them to draw comfort and encouragement therefrom, they may expect their condition

dition shall be very sad, when they are deprived of it. *But how can One be warm alone.*

10. As the Children of the Lord may expect many assaults in their Christian courses, and may be also sometimes prevailed against; so those who have any strength, are bound to imploy it for the relief of others who are in Combat, and like to be foiled, and ought not to desert their Fellow-souldiers being engaged in a good quarrel, though they prove weak, whether they be assaulted or prevailed against by outward enemies 2 Sam. 10, 11. or Spiritual Gal. 6. 1. For their being assaulted and prevailed against, is here supposed, and the Duty of others to withstand the Evil One, or any of his instruments, is also held forth as the advantage to be expected by Christian Society, *if One prevail against him, Two shall withstand.*

11. As the Union of the Children of the Lord among themselves, should be so strict, as their Adversaries may lose hopes of breaking one of them, except they break all, so when the Lord doth unite them, and keep them so, it will be no easy matter for their most powerful enemies to prevail against them. For, this proverbial speech holding forth the advantage of Christian Unity and Society, contains a benefite larger than the former, and prior to it, *A threefold cord is not easily broken.*

Ver. 13. *Better is a poor, and a wise Child, than an old and foolish King, who will no more be admonished.*

14. *For out of prison he cometh to reign, whereas also he that is born in his Kingdom becometh poor.*

Here is a fourth consideration offered to men, to wear their hearts from the apprehension of any Happiness in this Earth, and it is concerning that Vanity which ordinarily attends Worldly Greatness, wherein the men of this World often place their greatest Happiness: And this he sets forth by

comparing a *Poor and Wise Child*, with an *Old and foolish King*. By the *Poor and Wise Child* is meant any one of a mean and contemptible outward condition, who yet is endued with *Wisdom* from above, and so is subject to the Counsels and admonitions of the Lord in his word; And by the *Old and Foolish King* is meant, any one advanced to Eminency and Worldly Greatness, who being destitute of saving Knowledge, and long spared in an evil course is now become incorrigible, and will not be Counsell'd or admonish'd by others. The former, (to wit, the *Mean* and contemptible One) *Solomon* prefers to the latter, and commends him, as in a far more happy condition, than the other for all his Greatness. And thus he proves by the Lords Dispensations about the one and the other, which are sometimes found to differ. As for *the Poor and Wise Child*, his wisdom is blest to advance him from an abject and miserable outward Condition (whereunto such an one is often brought under wicked Rulers) even to Dignity and Greatness in the World; And for *the Old, and Foolish King*, who was born in his own Kingdom, and so born Heir of a Crown, by his Folly and Obstinacy he is in Gods displeasure brought to Misery. Now these events are not to be understood, as if they did always so fall out to persons so qualified: seeing it is clear that many of the Godly may remain in a despicable and afflicted condition, so long as they are in the World, and many wicked men in Eminency may carry their Riches and Greatness to their end with them. But the meaning is, that there are in Scripture, and have been in all ages, frequent instances of such Dispensations, as is clear in the example of *Joseph*, a *Poor and Wise Child*, brought out of Prison to Reign, and of *Pharaoh*, *Jebojakim*, *Zedekiah*, and others, *Old and Foolish Kings*, who would not be admonish'd, brought down from their Dignity to great Misery: And it may be *Solomon* hath here an Eye to the Lords different Dispensations with his own Father, and with *Saul*, to both of whom the Descriptions here, do in some sort agree

agree; which proves sufficiently that Happiness is not to be placed in Worldly Greatness, by reason of the Vanity, both of Sin and Misery, incident to the same.

Hence Learn. 1. Although youth be ordinarily *Rash and Inconsiderate* 1 Cor. 14. 20. *Inconstant* Eph. 4. 14. And *easily led away by bad Counsell* 2 Chron. 13. 7. All which are contrary to true Wisdom; Yet may the Lord be pleased to Communicate his Wisdom to them, in a greater measure than he doth to Aged, and Experienced men, who are not therefore to intertain such a suspicion of young mens rashness and folly, as to expect no good Counsel from them: For, *Solomon* supposeth that the Lord may, and sometimes doth, Communicate much Wisdom even to a *Child*, while he saith, *Better is a Poor and Wise Child, than an Old and Foolish King.*

2. As those who are in a poor and contemptible outward condition in the World, may be indued with inward qualifications of excellent use, and therefore the evidences thereof in such, are to be carefully marked, and highly esteemed of, such Pearles are not to be slighted, though in the dust, seing God will lift them up afterward; so there is such excellency in Wisdom, especially the saving knowledge of God, and his will, that it makes the persons indued with it (were they never so mean otherwise) worthy of more esteem, than the greatest on earth that want it, what ever advantages of Age or Place, they may have beside, to raise their esteem in peoples minds; For (saith the spirit of God) *Better is a Poor, and Wise Child, than an Old and Foolish King.*

3. Although Eminency in place, and Length of days, should teach men Wisdom, yet nothing of that sort without Gods special blessing, can make men truly wise. *Wisdom* is neither ryed to Age nor Place but is Gods free Gift, for here, *an Aged One, and a King, and yet Foolish.*

4. As no mans Dignity or Eminency in place in the World, doth exeeem him from the necessity of Admonition, or from

the Duty of subjecting to it; nor others though inferior to him, from giving it seasonably, and according to their calling; So it is ordinarily found, that when wicked men are advanced to high places, and especially when they are long spared even to Old Age in their evil courses, they give no place to Admonition, their Ears are kept so throng with hearing of Flatterers. *Hos. 7. 3.* And these stamp such bad impressions upon the Minds of Rulers and so misrepresent those who have a calling to admonish them *Amos 7. 10.* that they will not suffer any of their Admonition: For, *Here is an Old and Foolish King, who will not be admonished.*

5. The word of God spares no man in his Wickedness because of his greatness, but without respect of persons for Eminency or Age, doth impartially discover mens evil courses, and those that would handle it faithfully, should do the same; For so doth this Preacher here, who is in this a pattern for all faithful Preachers while he publisheth this, *Better is a Poor and Wise Child, than an Old and Foolish King,*

6. It is a special mark of saving Wisdom, to subject those that are indued with it to admonition, it makes them sensible of their own folly *Prov. 3. 2.* And therefore not only Admonitions but reproofs are sweet to them, *Psal. 141. 5* And on the contrary, it is a special mark of one destitute of saving Wisdom, to be so puffed up with the conceit of their own wit, as not to submit to so much as an Admonition concerning the evil of their way: For in this, the condition of *the Old and Foolish King,* is debased below the condition of *a Poor and Wise Child,* that the one manifests his folly in this (the contrary whereof is to be understood of the other) that he will not be admonished.

7. When wicked men bear Rule, ordinarily those who for their parts and qualifications, deserve most esteem and respect, are most hardly dealt with, those who ought to be preferred, are imprisoned: for, *the Poor and Wise Child,* or any one represented by him, is here supposed to have been in a sad and mean condition, while it is said *he cometh out of Prison.* 8 The

8. The Lord may have a design of much good toward men, with whom his Dispensations are such for the time, as speak to sense and carnal reason, rather their ruine, and his displeasure, than any good to them, he will have them tried, humbled, and ingaged to him for their deliverance: For, the *Poor and Wise Child* may seem undone, when he goeth to Prison, and yet *Out of prison he cometh to Reign*.

9. Though the Lord would not have his people promise nor desire to themselves great things in this World, *Jer. 45. 5.* Yet sometimes he gives visible proofs of his respect to Piety, by conferring Worldly Honour and Greatness, upon some of them that are endued with it. And though there be but few that have this in a literal sense made good to them, yet it is a sufficient encouragement to all of them, that this shall be at last truly said of every one of them, at death, and the resurrection, *Out of Prison he cometh to Reign*.

10. When singular Gifts and qualifications especially of Wisdom, bud forth early in young Ones, it is a promising evidence (and ought so to be Cherished) of some eminent employment or Service that God hath for them: though the same may also prognosticate trials from the Malice and Envy of the World, for it is *the Poor and Wise Child*, or such as are signified by him, *who cometh Out of Prison to Reign*.

11. Although the Lord may suffer wicked men to prosper in their sinful course, even to the close of their time, yet sometimes he doth in time give proofs of his displeasure with them, and smites the Hoary Scalp of them that go on to Old Age in their Wickedness: For here, *the Old and Foolish King Born in his Kingdom, becometh poor*.

12. Oppression of the poor Godly; and rejecting of Admonition, are oftentimes Forerunners of sad strokes even in this life: for this *Old King*, representing any in Greatness, hardened by long forbearance, having rejected Admonition, and *Inprisoned the Wise Child*, is now though *Born in his Kingdom, become poor*.

13. The longer men continue in their sins, the more unwilling they are to take with Admonition, because they think the less of their faults the longer they beset: For, though it be supposed, that this *King* never made use of Admonition, seeing he is become *Old* in his *Folly*, yet he is set forth as at a greater height of Wickedness in his Age, than he had been in his youth, that whereas before he would have heard men speak as they pleased, and he would have done as he pleased, yet now, he will not so much as hear, *He will be no more Admonished.*

Ver. XV. *I considered all the Living which walk under the Sun, with the Second Child that shall stand up in his stead.*

XVI. *There is no end of all the People, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after, shall not rejoice in him: surely this also is Vanity, and vexation of Spirit.*

THE last Observation holds forth another Vanity attending worldly Greatness; which floweth not from the fault of persons in power, as the former, but from the inconstancy of peoples Affections, who soon fall off from the present Ruler, and become fond upon the succeeding, of whom likewise they will as soon weary: The consideration whereof may wean the hearts of Men from placing their Happiness in worldly Dignity or Applause.

And in expressing this Observation, the Preacher shews *First*, What a large view he took of all the people in the World, he considered all the Living that walk under the Sun, to wit, as Subjects under some one Magistrat or other, nor as if he could have had every individual person subjected to his thoughts, but that his vast and comprehensive wit, enlarged and assisted by the Spirit of the Lord, reached so far, as he might understand the ordinary temper of all Men, in reference to their Magistrats.

2. He joined with this, the consideration of the *Second Child*, or did consider jointly all the people and this *Second Child*: Now whe-

whether we take this *Second Child* for the Son of the *Poor and Wise Child* formerly mentioned, who was brought out of Prison to Reign, or for that Child himself, as coming to the Government, called *Second* in reference to his Predecessor the *Old and Foolish King*, it is all one as to the purpose in hand. By him we may understand any person coming to his Predecessours Government, who is now to stand up, or (as the expression in Scripture signifies *Dan. 11. 2.*) to come to the power of Government, in the stead of that other, who is now looked upon as sitting down, or falling by from it.

And 3. He shews what he found remarkable and useful to his scope, in this consideration. And 1. He found that *There was no end of all the People*: Whereby is meant, That their Affectation of changes in Government, is *Boundless*, and their fondness upon the newly advanced, or advancing person, all of them following him, and Adoring the Rising Sun, is *Endless*, even as the people that lived before them were wont to do to him whom they within a little forsook: So that though the generation of their Fathers be gone; yet this perverse humour of doating upon Men at their first advancement to Power, is not at an end, but lives yet in them that come after. 2. He foresees how those who are to live within a little time after, will change in their affections toward the Man upon whom those who live now are so fond, *They shall not rejoice in him*; In which words there is more implied than is exprest, even the contrary affirmative, as is clear by the Scripture explaining it self in such Expressions, *Prov. 27. 21. The Father of a Fool hath no joy*, is there explained, he hath *much sorrow*. And *Rom. 4. 19, 20. Abraham was not weak in the Faith*, is there also explained, he was *strong in the Faith*. So by this, *They shall not rejoice in him*, is implied they shall be *much wearied* with him within a little. Or by *those that come after* may be understood, those same who are now so fond upon the *Second Child*, called *Those that come after*, in respect of those that were before them, within a little

little time they shall not rejoice in him. And lastly, He passeth a Censure upon this disposition of people, and the lot of Magistrats, that it is Vanity, or a proof of the emptiness of Humane Courses to give Men true satisfaction, and proves to them who seek it in them, a *Vexation*, or eating up of *their Spirit*.

Hence Learn 1. They that would promote the work of Mortification in their hearts, must not soon weary of searching out farther and farther Considerations, which may be blest for that end, even the best, after some measure of that frame is wrought in them, are ready to be again intangled with the love of things earthly, and to doate upon them, as if some piece of Happinels were to be found in them; and therefore they had need to store their hearts with plenty of such Observations, as may at last perswade them, that there is nothing but Vanity, and Disappointment in these things, and that there is not an Instance to be found in all the World to the contrary, for which cause, *Solomon*, after many Considerations to this purpose, adds this, *I considered all the Living that walk under the Sun.*

2. While Men in Power and Authority in the World, have the people flocking about them, honouring and acknowledging them, they should be taken up with thoughts of a Change, and consider the people that are so doing, as *walking* with the Man that is to come up *in their stead*, courting him, and themselves as shortly to fall one way or other, and not to *walk* any more with others *under the Sun*: For so *Solomon* here represents this Change to himself and to all others, of One falling down, or sitting by, and Another *standing* up, or coming to the Government *in his stead*, and the generality of the people joining themselves to him, Courting and Flattering him, *I considered all the Living who walk with the Second Child &c.*

3. As people are generally led by example to applaud, and cry up Men, especially such as are rising to preferment, so that a few will carry an innumerable multitude with them, 2 *Sam.* 15.

4. So are they excessive, and in a manner boundless in their

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respect while it lasts, and yet very inconstant in the same: For the multitude of people that join themselves to this *Second Child*, or advancing Ruler, and the boundlessness of their fond respect for a time, as also the certainty of the change of it, may be safely according to the scope taken to be held forth in this expression, *There is no end of all the People.*

4. There is such proneness in succeeding Generations to follow the corrupt customs of the preceeding, (corrupt Nature being every natural Man's Guide) that one begins where another leaves off; so that ordinarily the temper of those who lived before, may be read in the temper of those who live after: For *Solomon* brings in the present Generation tracing the steps of those who were before them, in their fond adhering to, and crying up of a new Heir, or Successour to the Crown, to wit, for a little time, but there will soon be a Change, as there was in those who lived before, as is clear while he saith, *There is no end of all the People, even of all that were before them.*

5. When people follow these who have been before them, in their foolish and sinful Courses, the Lord ordinarily blasts their Expectations, and gives them no matter of *Rejoicing* where they promised most of it to themselves: For, when they are fond upon the rising Ruler, as their Ancestors were in the like case, the Lord putteth the sentence upon them, *They shall not (long) Rejoice in him.*

6. Those who are most *Overjoyed* with new Rulers, when first they are advanced to their Dignities, are readiest to be the greatest Loathers of them: Peoples affections can scarcely abide any considerable time in the height or extremity: For, here it is set out as the general temper of people, that they are very much taken with men rising to Honour, and Power over them the one day, and the next day they loath them, For (saith the Preacher) *I considered all the Living under the Sun--that walk with the Second Child---that they shall not rejoice in him.*

7. Peoples affections, and respect to their Rulers is ordinarily very changeable, being founded not upon their Office, as an

Ordinance of God, but rather upon self interest; and expectation of great things from them: For here, the people who were lately seen *walking with the Second Child*, or Apparent Heir of the Crown, coming to the exercise of his power, and as it were affectionately adoring the Rising Sun, do now when he is under a cloud as to them, and not so warm and comfortable as they expected, or shining more favourably upon others, change in their affections to him, which is here told unto all, *They that come after shall not rejoice in him.*

8. Every man advanced to Eminency, Power, or Esteem among men, should look upon himself as standing upon a very slippery Foundation, and particularly upon Worldly applause, as a flower that will soon wither, and become unfavoury; And though they live not long, they should resolve to see their own applause, and Peoples delight in them, die before themselves; For, hereof are such men certified, as that which is the ordinary effect of Peoples inconstant humour, *They that come after shall not rejoice in him.*

9. They that would abate their ambitious Desires of high places, and Worldly Honours, should cast off all fancy of contentment, wherewith they are ready to be ravished, upon supposition that they had these; and consider the inconstancy of Peoples humour, whereupon such things depend, how soon and easily their delight in them, may be turned into Loathing, and wearying of them: For, therefore is the man who is enamoured with this Vanity of Ambition, told what he may expect within a little, *The People shall not rejoice in him.*

10. The best of men being advanced to Worldly Dignity, especially from a mean condition, are in hazard to idolize their new Monours, as a piece of their Happiness: For to him who is supposed to be brought *Out of Prison to Reign*, or to his Son, is this held forth as necessary to be laid to heart by him, for wearing it from Worldly applause as his Happiness, *They that come after shall not rejoice in him, and this also of Kings.*

11. It is a great favour of God to Rulers, highly to be prized by them, when People have comfort and joy of them, providing the People be thereby incited to Rejoice in God's goodness therein manifested to them, 1 *King.* 8. 66. And it is the guilt of People not to Rejoice thus in Good mens advancements above them, for the contrary of this is here foretold as Peoples sin, and an evidence of their Levity; And threatned as the punishment of these Rulers who affect applause, *The People shall not rejoice in him.*

12. This Levity and inconstancy of Peoples affection, making them weary of him upon whom they were lately so fond, is a clear proof of mens Vanity, in affecting Worldly Greatness and Applause as any part of their Happiness: The consideration whereof should wean their hearts from the same, and if they will not make that use of it, but will still pursue these Vanities as their Happiness, they shall meet with disappointment and Vexation, as they are here certified, *Surely this also is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.*

CHAP. V.

THE ARGUMENT

THE Preacher having in the former Chapters made some discoveries of the chief ways by which men seek for Happiness in the earth, and by several Arguments laboured to dissuade from that vain Enterprise: He in this Chap. holdeth forth the way of attaining, and entertaining that true peace and contentment of Spirit, wherein a great part of mens Happiness in this life doth consist: Affordeth some dissuaves from the prevailing evil of Covetousness, which filleth the heart with vexation and disquietness, and singularly commendeth the holy Sobor and abstinent use of creature comforts, as very contributive to true rest and quiet of Spirit, And accordingly the Chap. is divided in three parts.

1. In the First part to v. 10 Solomon giveth several directions for obtaining and improving of true peace and quietness of mind, which renders a man so happy in this life. The first wherof concerning the right way of going about the publick worship of God, in the solemn Assemblies of his people, wherein true peace of mind and fellowship with God is to be had To wit, That as they are to frequent the publick Ordinances, and to watch over their affections whilst they meet in them. so are they willingly and chearfully to hearken unto, and embrace the mind of God in the mouthes of his Messengers. ver. 1. Which bepresth by two arguments, the one taken from the small reckoning, the Lord maketh of the external part of worship (as being but folly in his account) without this right ordering of the affections and hearty receiving of the word which is the internal part of the Lords Service. ver. 1. The other taken from the sinfulness and danger of resting (as formal Hypocrites doe) in the external performance of duties without the inward power and life of them, ver. 1. The Second direction is concerning privat worship to God, especially secret Prayer, set down both Negatively, that we be not rash or unadvised in our expressions, nor sudden and indigested in our desires before God: And positively, that we endeavour to express our desires to God in as few words (uttered with humility, faith and love without Tautology or vain repetitions) as we can, ver. 2. Which he enforceth upon several grounds. The 1st is taken from the Majesty and Excellency of God who inhabiteth the Heavens. ver. 2. The 2d from our busyness and wiliness, being of and in the earth ver. 2. The 3d. from a proverbial speech That dreams come from a multitude of Busyness, importing, That an excess of affaires in the day time occasions a number of wild and confused fancies of dreams in the night season: So Men having their hearts overcharged with the cares of this life, cannot but (through want of serious preparation) speak unconcernedly and unadvisedly to God in prayer, ver. 3. And the 4th is taken from the effect of this inconsiderat multiplying of words to God, set forth in another proverb, That a Fools voice is known by the multitude of words importing, that, as much speaking in anything discovereth great imprudence, so especially, Vain babling to God in prayer, bewrayeth a man to be destitute of true and saving wisdom, ver. 3. All which infer, that in our addresses to God in prayer we ought not to be inconsiderat, either in thoughts, or expressions: But in as few serious words as possibly we can (except in some cases when God calleth to more length and continuance) to pour out our hearts before God. The Third Direction is Concerning the serious making, and conscientious and ready performance of vows unto God in these things, which tho' in themselves lawfull, yet in respect of circumstances of time, place, &c. are Arbitrary and in our own power ver. 4. Which be prest by two Reasons, The one, that the Lord is so far from taking pleasure in such foolish men as think to put him off with fair promises without accomplishment, that he doth very much loath and abhor such Slighters of their Vows unto the most High ver. 4. The other, That in such cases of Arbitrary and indifferant things, it were better not to take on, than having come under engagements, to neglect the performance of them, ver. 5. The Fourth Direction is, Concerning rash and sinful engagements, held forth by way of disavow. Where (1) the

Proceeding

Preacher sets down two branches of the debilitation. The one is that men would beware to utter such unadvised resolutions and Vows with their mouth, as being once spoken and determined with them, do (through their pride and corruption) make them conceive themselves under a kind of necessity to stand to the performance of them, and so ease their flesh or members of their Body to be active in accomplishing what they have rashly and sinfully Powed, ver. 6. The other Branch is, That people would not excuse or mince the making and keeping of such unadvised and sinful Vows, when they are discovered to them so be such, by giving them such an extenuating name, as only to call them, An Errour, or Small mistake; But that they look on them as a grievous offence deserving a worse designation, ver. 6. (2) He presseth this direction by several Motives, As First, That these rash Vows involve the whole man in sin, ver. 6. Next, That this sinful course is highly aggravated not so much by being in the presence of publick Ministers of the Church, who are called Angels in Scripture, And in the view of holy angels who frequently are witnesses to our Religious Actions, As that it is done before the face of the great Angel of the Covenant Christ Jesus, ver. 6. Thirdly, The fiery indignation of God against such inadvertant making, and peremptory standing to the performance of sinful engagements, ver. 6. Fourthly, The Lords frequent overturning what devices and works men by these sinful undertakings do build, ver. 6. And Fifthly, That there are many sins and sorrows attending and following that way of coming under rash and unlawful Vows, which is illustrated by a similitude or proverb: That as in the multitude of Dreams there are many wild fancies, which evanishing leave a man, when he awakes under fretting and vexation; so in multiplying of words; especially in rash Vows, there are many sinful vanities and vexing disappointments, ver. 7. And (3) he lays down an effectual remedy against the foresaid evil which may also have the place of another direction) of rash and sinful undertakings, which is that People would study to keep themselves under a holy and reverential fear of God, both in his Goodness and Judgements. The want of which is the root (as of other ills) of this precipitant way of Vowing and engaging in sinful courses, ver. 7. The Fifth Direction is, Concerning submission unto the wise providence of God in ordering the saddest dispensations for the good of his Saints, ver. 8. In prosecution of which. He (1) supposeth that the Saints will meet with oppression and have the Seat of Justice that should defend them turned to further violence against them, ver. 8. (2) He dissuades from that Bupled and distrustful wondering at such a dispensation, ver. 8. (3) He proffeth this by diverse arguments. As, First, The Eminency and Sovereignty of God, as being far above the highest Oppressors, ver. 8. Next. His care to avenge the injuries done unto, and the notice he takes of his Saints who under oppression keep his way, ver. 8. And Thirdly The many choice instruments especially of high and mighty Angels whom he hath to employ in taking vengeance for the wrongs done to his people, any of whom being backed with his commission is far above the highest Oppressor on earth, ver. 8. And Fourthly, He dissuadeth from any Oppression of the Saints by men so power upon two accounts. The one is, That

the profit or increase of the earth, is for the Poor as well as the Rich, and therefore the great ones should not by violence take all from them, as if it only belonged to themselves. ver. 9. The other is, That the mighty Monarchs of the World are themselves furnished by the fruits of the ground, through the industry of the poor Labourers, which should bind them from oppressing them, ver. 9.

II. In the second part of the Chapter, The Preacher dissuadeth from the sin of Covetousness, as a great hinderance to true Happiness, and Peace by several Reasons from ver. 10. to 18. As (1) That neither Silver, nor the abounding increase of any other thing can give true satisfaction to the heart of man, and therefore it is vanity to set his heart upon them, ver. 10. (2) That ordinarily as Riches increase with any, so Providence doth multiply Instruments and Objects, who, if a man do as he ought, will consume a great part of his substance; and what is left behind the owner hath no more, but a naked sight thereof, which will contribute little to his Peace and Happiness, ver. 11. (3) That the poor Godly man who painfully laboureth, both in seeking the true Riches, and in the Duties of his calling, enjoyeth sound sleep and rest, both to Body and Spirit, whether his Day be light and spare, when he gains but little, or more liberal (yet in Sobriety) when God is pleased to bless his diligence with more success, ver. 12. (4) That the insatiable pains of getting and increasing Worldly things is attended with so much Anxiety of Spirit, that it bereaves these Mammon-Servants of that rest, and sleep which the Lord allows upon men in the night season, ver. 12. (5) That Riches covetously sought after and finfully improven, prove hurtfull to the owners laying them open both to sin and snares, which he not only observeth but regretteth, ver. 13. (6) That it frequently falleth out, That what hath been long and well kept of Worldly things, is either by the owners finfully wasted, or by God justly scattered, so that it seldom fills the hand even of the nearest Off-spring, ver. 14. (7) That there is a necessity of parting with all Worldly enjoyments, That as a man came into the World without these things, so must he return, and go as he came, ver. 15. Which the Preacher inserteth both by way of reprove, ver. 15. 16. And by way of conviction, inquiring at the conscience, what profit a man hath at his Death in having followed that which is no better to grip or hold then the wind, and can be no more useful to him in another World, or refreshful here, then the Wind to a hungry man, ver. 16. And (8) That the Covetous wretch even in the midst of his enjoyments, is but in a poor miserable condition ver. 17. In regard, That as all his (even joyful) days are void of true spiritual comfort, and he still either feeling or bawling matter of sorrow, ver. 17. So is he ordinarily plagued with rage and wrath at providences and instruments that impede his Worldly projects, and with a sickness of Soul through cares and fears, which sometimes distemper also his body, especially while he denieth himself the comfortable use of the creature, ver. 17.

III. And in the Third part of the Chapter, least the former Reason dissuading from Covetousness should be misimproven, as setting men upon a morose severe and comfortless way of living; The Wise man doth from ver. 18. to the end highly commend a holy sober and cheerful use of the comforts which God in his providence bestows upon men in this life. And in order to this he saith, (1) That

all to ponder what he in his experience had found, To wit, That it is a mans subordinate and inferior good as it fits him for enjoying the chief Happiness, and a considerable Ornament both to his own deportment and to the way of Godliness: That a man should (tho' not in sensuality and excess) in moderation and sobriety, take his free and chearful use of the Creatures which God blesses him with for keeping up of the outward man in the better capacity to do him service: This being (tho' not his chief and best yet) his temporary portion and reward of his Labour, ver. 18. (2) He shewes, That all these outward comforts, the power of health and heart to make use of them for strength to doe God Service, wisdom to take their own due portion of them suitable to their rank, and employment, neither defrauding themselves, nor any whom they are bound to maintain, of the comfortable use of them, and the Grace to partake of them with joy and cheartfulness in following of duty, are all the special Gifts of God, ver. 19. And (3) He giveth the Reason why men should endeavour this holy and chearful use-making of the Creatures: Because thereby, as he shall be diverted from the vexing remembrance of his by-past sorrows, so shall he be kept from the solicitous fears of his future miseries in the days of his life: Whilst the Lord makes him rejoice in his enjoyment of these things, not so much as the fruit of his lawful diligence, as the sweet and reasonable return of his Prayers, ver. 20.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1. *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, then to give the Sacrifice of Fools: for they consider not that they do evil, and they will be hated.*

Solomon having discovered the Vanity of the principal Courses which Men take for Happiness in the Earth, and held forth several Considerations, to divert Mens hearts from them: He cometh now in the first part of this Chapter to give directions for attaining to that true Peace and Quietness which is attainable in this Life. The first Direction is, Concerning the right way of going about the Worship of God, especially in publick, where most ordinary Communion with the Lord is to be had: and this he holds forth in two Branches, The first is, That Men should watch ever (as the Word trans-

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lated *Keep* signifies) *their Feet*, which are the Affections of the Soul, whereby they Act and Move in Spiritual Performances, especially when they come to the publick Ordinances, that these may be kept free of sinful Distempers, which marr Communion with God in Ordinances. The *Second* is concerning the hearty receiving of the Mind of God, delivered in the publick Assemblies of His People, that Men should be *ready to Hear* or (as the Word signifies) *Draw near to Hear*, not only the Voice of Ministers, but of the Lord Himself speaking to them, with dependance upon Him for His Blessing upon the Truth. And this he presseth as that which should take up people more than the external performance of Duties, which being separat from internal Worship, consisting in the Right ordering of the Affections, and hearty receiving of the Word, is nothing else but the *Sacrifice of Fools*. The external part of Worship is exprest by *Sacrifice*, because that was in Solomon's time a principal part of publick Worship, comprehending all the rest. Now to rest upon that without looking to *Christ the true Sacrifice* and to the Internal and Spiritual Worship, was but *Folly* in Gods account; and this he dissuades from, by a reason taken from the disposition of formal Hypocrites, who if they perform the External Duties, never lay to heart how much Sin is in their Service, that so they might be chased to *Christ the true Sacrifice*.

Hence Learn 1. Although the Infinit God cannot be contained in any place, no not in the *Heaven of Heavens*, much less in a house made with hands. 1 King. 8. 27. Act. 7. 48. And though He have not now under the Gospel so tyed His publick Worship to any one place more than another, as he did of old, *Joh. 4. 21, 23*; yet it is His Mind that there be always a Place set apart for the meeting of His People together about His publick Worship, that thereby His Glory as King of the Church may be upheld, *Jer. 3. 17*. His People may solemnly testify their subjection to Him, and cheer up one another in His Service, *Pf. 95. 6*. Any place may be safely called His *House* where

where He doth in a special way manifest His presence. *Exod. 20. 29.* where He feasts His people with His Truth, & spiritual Comforts conveyed thereby, *Cant. 2. 4.* For *Solomon* speaks here to all the Members of the Church in whatsoever age thereof, supposing them to have such meeting places to resort to, while he saith, *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.*

2. They that would have that true Peace and Contentment, which cannot be had in all the Pleasures and Delights of this Earth, must frequent these places where the Lord's publick Ordinances are, seeing it is there especially that He solves the perplexing Doubts of his own, which marr their Contentment, *Pf. 73. 16, 17.* removes their Discouragements, and makes them truly joyful, *Luk. 56. 7.* and communicates his strength for bearing them through their Duties and Difficulties, *Pf. 96. 2. 6.* For it is here supposed according to the scope, that they who would have that true Contentment and Satisfaction, which they have sought, and been disappointed of in many things, must now come and seek it in the *House of God.*

3. They that would go about Ordinances, so as they may attain to the end of them, which is Communion with the Lord, and so peace and quietness of Spirit, must keep a very strict watch over their Affections, labouring to have them cleansed from the filth of their by-past sinfulness, which cleaves to them in every step of their Course, by Repentance, and Application of the Blood of Christ, *Job. 13. 10.* to lay aside their Carnal Passions, which was darkly signified of old, by putting off their Shoes, *Exod. 3. 5.* and is more plainly exprest in the New Testament, *1. Pet. 2. 1, 2. Jam. 1. 21.* to have their hearts stamped with Holy Reverence toward God, *Pf. 89. 7.* and all their Affections composed, and fixed upon him, *Pf. 86. 11.* For this is in substance the duty which is here, and in the Scriptures cited, preest in order to the attaining of sweet Fellowship with God in Ordinances, *Keep thy Feet when thou comest into the House of God.*

4. There is no part of publick Worship can be acceptable to God, or comfortable to Men, except they study a ready receiving of the Word, which consists in a humble expectation of such Truths as may be useful, and of a Blessing with them, *Ab. 10. 33.* In the eagerness of desire after the Word, as the Souls necessary Food, *1 Pet. 2. 2.* and in the hearty Application of the same to our selves by Faith, *Heb. 4. 2.* and that in order to the practice and obedience of it, *Pf. 119. 11.* For this is the second Branch of the Direction here preſt, as more profitable for attaining Fellowship with God in Ordinances, than what else can be done in publick Worship, this being neglected, *Be more ready to Hear, than to give the Sacrifice of Fools.*

5. As they that would profit by the Word should bring their Bodies as near for hearing as they can with decency; So their prime care must be to draw near to the Lord by humble dependence upon Him, as speaking to them by Instruments, for the Words in the Original are, *Draw near to Hear, rather than &c.*

6. It is a foolish thing in Men to offer External Worship to God, while their hearts are estranged from Him; while His Word is not received in Faith and Love, Men are Fools if they think to please Him who is a Spirit with External Service: For here the Sacrifice comprehending all External Worship, separat from the affection, and hearty respect to the Mind of God, is called the Sacrifice of Fools.

7. It is the Mark of Hypocrites to be much in External Duties, and little reflecting upon the Evil of them, to take much pains about the Form of Godliness, and never seriously to consider, how abominable the Form without the Power is to the Lord; Whereas, on the other hand, truly Godly and Sensible Souls, use to be very suspicious of, and humbled for the Iniquity of their Holy Things: For formal Hypocrites are here described from their Disposition, that while they are more ready to offer Sacrifice than to Hear, They consider not what they do evil.

3. Not only are Men *Evil-doers* when they act that which is in it self sinful, but even when they go about commanded Duties, Resting upon the outward form of them, not only must they answer for their Commission of Sin, and Omission of Duty, but for their Performance of Duty, while they studied not to keep their hearts in a right Frame: For here the *Fools* or *Hypocrites* are not challenged for neglect of *Sacrifice*, but for not looking to their Feet, or Affections, they consider not that they do *Evil*.

Ver. 2. *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in Heaven; and thou upon Earth: Therefore let thy words be few.*

Although the purpose of this Verse, may safely be taken as a disswave from censuring of the Truth, instead of ready *Hearing* of it, prest in the former, and from *Rash* speaking in Divine Matters; Yet it seems most agreeable to the scope to look upon the Words, as containing a second Direction in order to the attaining of true Peace and Contentment. And it is concerning the right way of going about secret Worship, and particularly the duty of secret Prayer, as the former Direction was concerning the right manner of performing public Duties.

And this Direction hath Three Branches: The *First* relates to *Vocal* Prayer, that we do not take upon us *Unadvisedly*, and without serious pondering of what we are to say, to express any thing to God in that Duty: The *Second* relates to *Mental* Prayer, that we do not present to the Lord our sudden and indigested Wishes or Desires, which have as plain a language to Him as our Words, but that we should labour to compose our Spirits, and form such Desires in our hearts to be offered to the Lord, as we may be sure will be well-pleasing to Him;

and this is the way to prevent the *Rashness* in our words before mentioned. And both these he presseth by two Reasons, the one taken from the consideration of God's Sovereignty and Excellency, whereof the Glorious *Heavens* (where He is said to be, because He doth there most gloriously manifest Himself) serve to put us in mind. The other from the consideration of our own Baseness and Vileness, whereof our dwelling place *the Earth*, serves to keep us mindful. The *Third Branch* of the Direction, which is also enforced by these two Reasons, is positive, that we study to express our Wants and Desires to God in Prayer, in as few Words as can be, which is not against fervent insisting in that Duty, but mainly against Formality, and vain Repetitions therein.

Hence Learn 1. Although we be slow to hear aright what God speaks to us, and so have need of the Spurr which *Solomon* gave to that in the former Verse; yet we are too foreward to speak *Rashly* and Unadvisedly to the Lord, or of His Matters, and have need of the Bridle and Restraint, which here the Spirit of God gives us, *be not Rash with thy mouth*.

2. Although we may not stay from the duty of Prayer, until we be able first to condescend upon all that we are to utter, and have determined what Expressions are futable, and what order of words we shall use, seeing many times our Distempers, Darknels, and Confusion remain when we are called to that Duty, *Job 37. 19*. And that there is ground of Hope, if we be conscionable therein, that we shall have the Spirit to help our Infirmities, though when we begin we know not what to pray for as we ought, *Rom. 8. 26*. yet it is the duty of all that expect access to God in Prayer, to consider before they go about that duty, what their Wants are, what futable Supply the Lord hath promised to them, and what grounds of Confidence from God's gracious Nature, His Promises, and Christ's Mediation, they have to go upon, least they express to Him their Carnal Passions, *Luk. 9. 54* their misbelieving

Apprehensions and Fears, *Pf. 31. 22.* their malecontentment with His Dispensations, *Jona 4. 1. &c.* Yea, least they seek from Him the satisfaction of their Lusts. *Jam. 4. 3.* To prevent all which, and the like sinful Distempers in Prayer, is this Direction given, *Be not Rash with thy Mouth.*

3. It is not enough for Christians to shun Rashness in their Expressions to God, but they must also beware of the sinful hasty Language which may be in their *Heart*; and not entertain sinful Wishes, or fretting Thoughts, or lay down any wrong conclusions in their minds, concerning His dealing with them, and that because the language of their Hearts is no less intelligible to the Lord than their words, and if they guard not their Hearts they shall not long be able to guard their Mouths, or if they do, it shall be but Hypocrisie: Therefore *Solomon* adds this second Branch of the Direction, to prevent the evil dissuaded from in the former, *And let not thy Heart be hasty to utter any thing before the Lord.*

4. We cannot but speak Rashly to God or of Him, and form in our Hearts Thoughts and Desires that will displease Him, unless we do by Faith apprehend Him a present God, and our selves before His Face, and our Heart-language no less plain to Him than our Words: For to enforce the former Dissuaves, He calls us to mind that whatever we utter with our Mouth or Heart, is before Him, or (as it is in the Original) *Before the Face of God.*

5. The Greatness, Sovereignty, Excellency, Power, Omniscience, and such other Perfections of God, as His Glorious Palace, whereof we think we see the out-side, serves to mind us of, *Pf. 19. 1.* and ought to be much in the Hearts of His People, who have most filial Confidence toward Him in Prayer, that the same may be qualified with Reverence, and they may be kept from these Evils presently dissuaded from: For to this end it is said, *For God is in Heaven.*

6. Our own natural Baseness and Weakness, whereof we should be minded by the place of our residence, here *below upon this Earth*, under the view of the Lord's Eye, and under the stroak of His Hand, Who is exalted so high above us, should likewise stamp our hearts with much reverence to Him, and make us, who are but Earth-Worms creeping about His Foot-stool, very attentive what we speak or think of such an Exalted Lord: For this is another Motive to that purpose, *Thou art upon Earth.*

7. Although the Lord understand our hearts desires and motions, as well as our words; and tho' our speech to Him in Prayer, be not to make Him understand what He knew not before; yet He will have Words and Expressions used in Prayer, for the better staying of our hearts upon the purpose we express, and the more effectual moving of our Affections, with the sense of our Need, by hearing our selves make our moan to Him, and for the strengthening of our Confidence by hearing our selves repeat to Him the grounds of Confidence to be heard and helped, which He hath given us. This is implied in the first and last Words of the Verse, *Be not rash with thy Mouth, and let thy Words be Few.*

8. Although it be sometimes safe, yea, necessary to continue long in Prayer, and speak many words to the Lord, especially when our own or the Churches Straits are urgent, and our strength and assistance great, *Luk 6. 12* and to speak *few words* to God may be a great guilt, when either our Laziness or Unbelief restrains our Prayer; yet considering how prone the best are to offend in Prayer, by speaking Words without Sense or Affection, so as they scarcely hear or understand what themselves speak, through reason of Security, Darkness and Confusion; and by vain Repetitions through penury of Matter, and *Rash* adventuring upon the duty, it is ordinarily safest in a *few words* from Faith and Affection, to express our Wants and Desires to God according to this Direction, *Let thy Words be Few.*

Ver.

Ver. 3. For a Dream cometh through the multitude of business, and a fools voice is known by multitude of words.

Solomon giveth here some farther Reasons to dissuade from *Rash* and Inconsiderat speaking to God in Prayer, and from idle multiplying of Words in that Duty, and these he expresses in two proverbial Speeches or Similitudes, taken from things common among Men, the Application whereof to the purpose may be easily gathered from what goes immediatly before: The First is, That *Dreams come from the multitude of business*: The meaning whereof according to the Scope is, That as multitude of distracting Businesses in the Day, occasions many confused Fancies in the Night; So Men being excessively taken up with the things of this Earth, and having their Hearts (which should be kept in a praying frame what ever they do) drowned in Worldly Employments, they must needs, if they speak any thing to God, speak it very Inconcernedly and Rashly, seing they take no leasure to prepare their hearts for such a Duty: So that this first similitude or proverb, presseth the former dissuasive from rash and inconsiderat speaking to God, by discovering the cause of it, namely, mens Distraction with the multiplicity of Worldly affairs, and so consequently points at the remedy thereof. The Second is, that a *Fools Voice is known by the multitude of Words*. The meaning whereof is, That as men discover their want of prudence even in common things by their much speaking, so vain Babling, and a multitude of words unadvisedly uttered to God in Prayer, doth bewray a man to be destitute of the clear knowledge of Gods excellency, and of his own Baseness, whereof Solomon spake before: And this second proverbial speech doth also hold forth the effect of that *Rashness*, to wit, that it doth but discover men to be Fools.

Hence Learn. 1. So much should the Lords servants and people be taken up with things spiritual, especially with the
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intertaning of correspondence and fellowship with God in Prayer, that the most ordinary and common occurrences should furnish them with some profitable considerations, which may enforce the right manner of going about that Duty, and may be held forth to others for their instruction therein: For here the wise man presseth upon himself and others the former direction, by such Observations of common occurrences, as few are unacquainted with, *a Dream cometh through the multitude of Business, and a Fools Voice is, &c.*

2. It is the multitude of worldly affaires wherewith men do excessively, and often without necessity take up their time, and the distraction of their hearts with these, that makes much rashness and inadvertance in speaking to God, while men take upon them in one day the Business and Toil of many days, they have no leisure to commune with their own hearts concerning their own case and Gods dealing with them, and this makes them that if they speak to God at all, they cannot but speak rashly, for so much is held forth in the application of this similitude, or Proverb, which is to be made according to the scope thus, *As Dreams come from the multitude of Business,* So rash and inconsiderate Expressions in Prayer, often come from the toil and spending of Mens Spirits about things Worldly, as the word *Business*, in the Original, signifies.

3. Although the Lord in His Providence put many Employments upon some of His People at once, giving them the charge and over-sight, not only of their own Estates, but of the Persons and Estates of others, in which case they may go about their Affairs relating thereto with a good Conscience, providing the same be done as Duty to God, *Pf. 119. 4.* with acknowledgement of Him, *Prov. 3. 6.* and the heart always as it may and ought to be in the greatest variety of Employment, kept in a disposition for duty, *Neb. 2. 4. Pf. 119. 23.* Yet when Men suffer their Thoughts to be distracted with these things, so as they do not at all watch to Prayer, nor prepare for that

that Duty, they provoke the Lord to take the use of their Reason and Memory from them, when they go about it, that though they could speak as an Oracle in other things, they shall speak as Men in a *Dream* when they go to Prayer: And though some things spoken Rashly by them in Prayer, may fall out to be pertinent; yet is the whole no more regarded by the Lord, than Mens *Dreams* use to be, though sometimes the Event may fall out according to the *Dream*: For that Truth which this proverbial Speech or Similitude leads to, according to the Scope, amounts to this, That Mens *Rashness* in their Prayers, which are in effect but their *Dreams*, flows from the *Multitude* of their worldly Affairs, and the distraction of their Minds with them, *A Dream cometh through the multitude of business.*

4. They that would have their Sleep sanctified, and so would be preserved from *sinful* or *affrighting Dreams*, should watch over themselves in the day time, and take good heed what *Business* they intangle themselves with: For readily their Dreams in the Night, will have something of the prevalent temper of their Spirits along the Day stamped upon them, as is imported in the truth that the Similitude holds forth in it self. *Dreams come through the multitude of business.*

5. Even when the Lord did extraordinarily manifest Himself to His Servants through *Dreams*, and Visions, these were not otherways looked upon in ordinary Men, than as the result of *multitude of business*, or some such natural Cause, much less when the Lord takes not that way: Therefore Solomon to whom the Lord appeared extraordinarily by *Dreams*, 1 King. 3. 5. holds forth this to others, that they should look no otherways upon their *Dreams*, than *As coming from the multitude of business.*

6. As much Discourse even in common things, argues much folly, so especially in the Matters of God, and particularly in Prayer to Him, wherein though Men think they Kyth much Wit, even so much as to prevail with God, by their much speak-

^{ing.} Mat 6. 7. yet multitude of words in that Duty, doth often betray Mens great Ignorance and Darkness concerning most necessary Truths, especially the Excellency and Greatness of God, and their own Baseness and Unworthiness. For this proverbial Speech hath a Truth in the literal meaning of it, and also in reference to the Scope, both which belong to the Doctrine. *A Fools voice is known by the multitude of words.*

- VER. 4. *When thou vowest a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it: for he hath no pleasure in Fools; pay that which thou hast vowed.*
 5. *Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay.*

HERE is the Third Direction for attaining to that true spiritual Peace and Contentment of Spirit, wherein much of Mans Happiness attainable in this Life doth consist, and it is concerning the conscionable and speedy performance of Vows made to God; because at publick Ordinances, and secret Prayer, Men are often engaged to that Duty: Therefore Solomon after he hath taught the right way of going about the Former, now presses the performance of the Latter, *When thou vowest a Vow* &c. he doth not speak of any Rash or Unlawful Vow, whereby men engage themselves, it may be to things in themselves Lawful, but either rashly, or without consideration of what may fall out; such as was *Jephthah's* Vow, or for some wicked end, as was *Abshams* pretended Vow in *Israhel*, much less of Vows concerning things simply sinful, as that of the Men who vowed to kill *Paul* *Acts* 23. 14. seeing such Vows being made, ought not to be payed at all. Neither doth he speak of these general Vows and Engagements, whereby all within the Church (that are capable) ought expressly to devote and consecrate themselves wholly to the Lord, & His obedience, and to renounce the Service of Satan, the World, and their own Lusts: Seeing these are absolutely necessary by vertue of Divine Precepts,

Pf. 96. 12. *114.* 19. 21. and to refuse the taking of such Vows is one of the highest Sins whereof a Man can be guilty. And the last Reason whereby he presseth the performance of the Vows here spoken of, agrees not to Vows of that sort. Therefore he must be understood to speak of Vows engaging to things lawful, but for the particular time and other circumstances of them, Arbitrary, and in our own power: As for Example; when the Lord's People under some great trouble oblige themselves to Thankfulness for a delivery, and to express the same, in such a manner, and at such a time, as is not particularly determined in the Word of the Lord, *Pf.* 116. 13, 14. Or when they engage to abstain from lawful Delights, in such a measure, and at such particular occasions, for promoting of Mortification, or better discharging of Duties, *Pf.* 132. 2. to consecrate so much of their time or substance to some pious Use. *Gen.* 28. 20. Or when they engage themselves to the practice or forbearance of things indifferent in their own nature, as necessary for attaining some good end, as *Paul* took on the Vow of a *Nazarite* for the more effectual gaining of the *Jews*, *Act.* 21. 23. though the thing was left for that time indifferent.

Now the conscionable and speedy performance of such engagements the Wise Man presseth here by two Reasons. The First is, That God hath no pleasure in, yea (as the expression imports) he doth extremely detest and abhor such Fools as slight their engagements, thinking to please him with empty promises, whereupon he presses the duty again, *Pay*, or (as the word signifies) Perfect and Accomplish *that which thou hast Vowed*, ver. 4. The Second Reason is, that it were better not to come under engagements in such cases, than to slight the same being taken on; by which Reason it appears, he speaks of Vows about such things as are in a mans own power, at least such as for the circumstances of them might without sin have been otherwise resolved upon, but being now determin-

ed, and ingaged unto, ought to be conscionably and speedily performed, see *Dent. 23. 21. 22.*

Doct. 1. It is lawful for the Children of the Lord to tye themselves by their expresse promise to him, for the performing of Duties at such times; or with such other circumstances, as are not particularly determined in the word, and which without sin might have been otherwise condescended upon; providing always they neither tye themselves, to any thing in confidence of their own strength, nor to any thing that is impossible, or may be prejudicial to any other necessary duty, which may be for the circumstances of it more particularly determined; but only to such things as Christian prudence, walking by the general Rules of the word, and waiting for the promised Spirit to lead them in all Truth, may direct them unto, that so they may be the more incited to Duty; and may thereby declare their hearty Approbation of, and Desire to be at their Duty *Psal. 119. 62.---106.* For of such engagements *Solomon* here speaks, and supposes them to be lawful, else he would not press the performance of them, nor affirm their ease to be better than theirs who having made them, perform them not, *When thou vowest a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it.*

2. All lawful Vows, especially Religious, are only to be made to the Lord, not to Angels, or Saints departed, there being neither precept nor example in Scripture for Vows of that nature; whereof there are many among the Papists: For so much is clearly intimat here, *When thou vowest a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it.*

3. The first opportunity of performing lawful Vows ought to be imbraced, considering that the edge and zeal which the heart usually hath in making them, will soon wear away, and Satan will not fail to coin and suggest difficulties, yea impossibility of performing them, and we our selves may shortly be out of capacity for the same, *Therefore* (saith the wise man here) *When thou vowest a Vow, defer not to pay it.*

4. The

4. The Lord is so far from taking *Pleasure* in fair promises, which are not backed with real endeavours after performance, that he doth extremely abhor the persons that offer such promises to him. and make no conscience of performance, as is imported in this Expression, *He hath no pleasure in Fools.*

5. When men postpone the paying of their Vows, or performing of the Duties whereunto they have engaged themselves, they do prove themselves *Fools* in Gods sight, however Satan, and their own Hearts suggest to them that they are Wise in waiting for a fitter opportunity, or a better disposition, for so they are here called, *He hath no Pleasure in Fools.*

6. The *Pleasure*, or *Displeasure* of God, should be the great motive to put men to Duty, or make them afraid to neglect it, therefore is this made the first Reason of the Duty here pressed, *He hath no Pleasure in Fools.*

7. Our Vows are imperfect things till they be performed, and so we should have little satisfaction, though we have gained the consent and engagement of our hearts to Duty, till we be at performance of it: For the word, *Pay*, signifies to Perfect or Accomplish, *Pay that which thou hast Promised.*

8. Though we cannot without sin withhold our hearts from engaging to Duties in the season of them (though this be not particularly determined in the Word, seeing it may be known by the general Rules thereof, and by employing the promised Spirit to teach us how to apply them) nor can we without sin forbear any thing, though never so indifferent in its own nature, when our Neighbours Edification requires us to practise it, whether we have taken on express and formal Engagements upon ourselves to that purpose, or not; yet it is a greater Guilt in Gods Sight to forbear such a thing in the season of it, after we have come under the Vows of God to perform it, than it would have been before, seeing now we falsifie our express promise and avowed purpose to God: For this is the second Reason, *Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.*

Ver.

Ver. 6. *Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin, neither say thou before the Angel that it was an Error; Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?*

7. *For in the multitude of Dreams, and many Words, there are also diverse Vanities; but fear thou God.*

The Preacher having given direction concerning the speedy performing of lawful Vows, and that in order to the attaining and entertaining of true Peace and Contentment, which is his Scope, he giveth here a Fourth Direction for the same end, concerning rash Vows or sinful Engagements.

And *First*, He holds forth this Direction or Diswative in Two Branches; The One is, that Men should restrain themselves from uttering such rash and unadvised Purposes, as being once determined, do in a manner force them to the Execution of them, they apprehending themselves under a sort of necessity to act what they have rashly vowed: For to *suffer the Mouth to cause the Flesh to sin*, is when Men are so distempered with the excess of Grief, Anger, or the like humane Passions, that they are not able to restrain themselves, but do give away (as the Word is here) *their Mouths* to vent their rash Purposes; and this being done, they apprehend themselves under a necessity to stand to their Engagements, though never so sinful, and to *cause their Flesh*, or their whole Man (for which the *Flesh* is oft put in Scripture, *Gen. 6. 12. Rom. 3. 20.*) to be active in performing their rash and sinful Undertakings, as is clear in the Example of Herod, *Mark 6. 26.* The other Branch of this Direction, is a diswative from extenuating such Rash and Sinful Vows, when they are discovered to be such, *Neither say thou it was an Error*, a Mistake, or some light Fault, which is not to be understood as if such rash Vows were not *Errors*, and so not to be acknowledged as such, but because they

they proceed often rather from Mens Inconsideration, and want of the Fear of God, as is imported in the Remedy of them, held forth afterward, than from their simple Ignorance and Mistake; therefore he would have Men not casting them so lightly by their hand, but rather looking upon them as a more heinous Sin, and so deserving a worse Name.

Secondly, He bears in this Direction by several Reasons: The *First* is imported in the First Branch, that such rash undertakings involve the whole Person in guiltiness, as it were by necessitating him to act these Purposes. The *Second* is expressed in the Second Branch, and is mainly against the Extenuation of them, in those Words, *Before the Angel*; which Reason though it have force, taking the Angel either for any publick Minister of God, who hath that Name both in the New and Old Testament, *Mal. 2. 7. Rev. 1. 20.* And so it may be taken here for the Priest, before whom, according to the Form of Worship in *Solomon's* time, Sins of Ignorance (as it is here supposed Men will pretend their rash Vows to be) were to be Confessed, *Lev. 4. 4. 5. 6.* Or taking it for any of the Created Angels of Heaven, whom the Scripture frequently sets forth as Witnesses of our Actions, especially in Religious Matters. *1 Cor. 13. 10.* Yet considering that the Reason being understood of either of these, doth necessarily include and imply the presence of him who is the *Great Angel of the Covenant*, *Mal. 3. 10.* And because the word *Angel* here hath such an Attitude, as the Scripture useth to prefix to Christs name, and likewise, because if we take it thus, The Argument is strongest. Therefore it seems safest to rest in this that the Argument is drawn from his presence, who is a Witness and Avenger of Rash Vows, and Mens Extenuations thereof. The *Third Reason* is taken from the just displeasure of God with such rash Engagements, and the slighting of them, *Why* (saith he) *should I be Angry?* the word signifies *Foaming Anger*, not as if there were any Passion or Fury in God, as uses to be in man, but his just displeasure is

is so exprest, because we cannot fear it as we ought, except we take it up under the similitude of a mans Rage; which makes him Fume with Anger, and desire to be avenged upon his Enemy. And he puts this Reason in a Question, thereby pressing the Rash and Inconsiderat man, to consider his hazard; Neither is the Question to be so understood, as if the Lord had no Reason to be *Angry*, but by it he would have Men convinced of their Folly in adventuring so rashly upon His Displeasure, and making so light of that which so highly provokes Him. The *Fourth* Reason is taken from the effect of God's displeasure, and that is the *Destruction of the work of mens hands*, the meaning whereof is, that hereby men provoke God to blast, and turn to nothing, their most serious undertakings, and *Works* wherein they take most pleasure, even by their rashness in Vowing, and slighting of their guilt in so doing. The *Fifth* Reason is, that there are many sins, and consequently many sorrows and disappointments attending this one sin of rash Vowing, both which are signified by this word, *Diverse Vanities*, and this is illustrate by a similitude which hath this force, as in the multitude of mens Dreams, there are many *vain and vexing Fancies*, So, in many words, especially in multiplying rash Vows, there are many sinful Vanities, and grievous Disappointments following thereupon: For frequently in Scripture, when two Sentences are thus coupled together, a Comparison or similitude between them is imported, see *Isa. 53. 7. Prov. 17. 3.*

Lastly, He prescribes the true remedy of this rashness, which is that men study to keep their hearts under a holy fear of offending God, the want whereof is the cause of the forementioned Miscarriage: And this may safely be looked upon as a *Fifth* Direction for attaining to true Peace and Contentment of Spirit.

Hence Learn: So great is the force of unmortified Corruption in Men who have not the powerful Restraint of God's Grace, and the use of sanctified Reason to bridle their Passions, that the very Members of their Body have a great Propension

to serve the corrupt Inclinations of their Soul: And when one Member is given up to act any Wickedness, it hath as it were a contraining power, to carry all the rest along with it, to concur with and be subservient to it in committing more Iniquity, see *1 Jam. 3. 4. 5. &c.* For *Solomon* speaks of the Mouth as strongly inclining to speak Rashly, and of the same having done so, as having a commanding power over the rest of the Members, which must flow from the Corruption of Nature, while he saith, *Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin.*

2. Men are so proud of their own Wit, naturally, and so unwilling to be esteemed Rash and Inconsiderat, that when they have proven themselves to be so in their Words, they will rather prove themselves to be so also by their Deeds, in executing what they have rashly resolved, than by their forbearance thereof seem to take with their own Rashness: For it is here supposed, that if once a Rash Vow escape the Mouth, it will readily carry the whole Man to the execution of it, and that very forcibly, while it is said, *Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin.*

3. They that would entertain true Peace and Tranquility of Mind, must be very careful to *Bridle their Tongues, and set a watch before the door of their Lips*; and for that end, to watch over their Spirits, that their Affections and Passions swell not over the Banks, which often occasions their rash Purposes, there being nothing that more ordinarily marrs the peace of those, who are otherwise tender Walkers, than Rashness in discourse, *1 Pet. 3. 10.* For this is a farther Direction for entertaining true Peace and Contentment of Spirit, *Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin.*

4. The difficulty of Mens restraining themselves from the execution of their rash Purposes, should make them very serious, and deliberat in taking on Vows, that if they cannot get them kept from stirring within, they may shut their Mouths, and hold them within Doors, for being once out, they will readily Cause

or imperiously Command *the Flesh to execute* them, as this exprestion, emphatically runs in the Original, and may be looked upon as having a Reason in the bosome of it for dissuading Men from venting their rash Purposes, taken from the force and power which these have upon their Wills in order to the execution of them, *Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin.*

5. When Men cannot altogether deny their Guiltiness, they are very prone to extenuate the same, and to give their Sins very favourable Names, that they may not disturb their own false Peace, nor put themselves in fear of that Wrath which will certainly follow, and might be fled from, if they would look upon their Sins in the own Colours, and cloathed with the own Aggravations thereof: For that it is ordinary with Men so to do, is imported in this second Branch of the Dissuasive, *Neither say thou it was an Error.*

6. *Jesus Christ* the Mediator and Great Angel of the Covenant, Who hath a more Excellent Name than any created Angel. *Heb. 1. 4.* is a present Witnels not only of Mens Actions, but of their Words, even such as are most rash, and which they themselves think scarcely worthy to be taken notice of, and not only of their rash Words, but of their Extenuations of the same; the consideration whereof should be a powerful Motive to make Men watchful over their Words: For this is a Reason of the Dissuasive from rash Vowing, especially from extenuating of it, that it is done before him. *Neither say thou before the Angel that it was an Error.*

7. It is no less a Provocation of God to *extenuate Sin*, than to commit it: Yea, it is a greater, it being a new Sin added to the former, for covering of it, yea a defending of it in a great part: For this third Reason is especially to be referred to the second Branch of the Dissuasive from the extenuating of Sin. *Why should God be angry at thy Voice?*

8. Though there be no Passion in God as uses to be in men, *Isa. 27. 4.* yet they that speak, or act contrary to His Will, may find such

such dreadful Effects following upon His just Displeasure, as Men use to apprehend upon the incensed Fury of those who are enraged against them, and so ought they to set forth His Wrath to their own Hearts for deterring them from Sin: Therefore is His Displeasure here set forth by a word signifying *Foaming Anger*, which is only incident to Men when they are beyond measure commoved with Passion: *Why should God be Angry, &c.?*

9 The Terror of the Lord, as well as His Loving Kindness, should be considered by His People, for restraining their Hearts from what is Evil in His Sight, especially seeing they are often in such distemper, through security and love to their Idols, that considerations of His Love have little weight with them; therefore is this here held forth as a reason of the former Dissuasive, *Why should God be Angry at thy Voice?*

10. If Men would exercise their Reason, they might see their own Folly in adventuring upon God's Displeasure so rashly as they do, and in extenuating of their Guilt when they have done so: For this Question is put to Mens Consciences, importing that they cannot give a Reason for their Practice, and that Conscience being put to it, they could not but see themselves unreasonable. *Why should God be Angry at thy Voice?*

11. Though the Lord may long suffer the *Work of Mens hands* to prosper, who are walking contrary to Him, and provoking Him to destroy them; yet such Men take the nearest course to *destroy their own works*, who do any thing sinful to make themselves prosperous, and the prospering of their works is but a Fore-runner of the Destruction of them. For this which is sometimes verified here, is held forth as that which is to be at last verified of all that continue to provoke the Lord, *He will destroy the work of thine hands.*

12. Even these Sins which Men account least of, may draw down these Strokes which they account the forest of any other, and that especially because they extenuate these Sins. For

there is nothing that Men value more, than the Works of their own hands, and nothing is more grievous than the destruction of these: And therefore the destruction of them is here threatened as a Consequent of God's Displeasure, incensed by Mens rash Vows. and their extenuating of them, *Why should God be Angry at thy Voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?*

13. There is in every Sin many Provocations of God, and consequently a multitude of Miseries attending the same. Any one Sin, be it *Rash Vowing*, or *Extenuating* thereof, proves these that are guilty of it, to be ignorant of God, or forgetful of His Presence, Terror, and Justice, and to have little Fear of Him in their hearts, and so draws down Destruction upon all their Undertakings: For both the multitude of Provocations, and the many Miseries attending the same, are comprehended under the *Diverse Vanities* here spoken of; and particularly Mens disappointment of their Undertakings is imported in the Similitude here brought in to illustrate this Reason, that as in *Dreams* Men feed themselves with many vain fancies, and hopes of great things, which are all vanished when they awake: So, *many words*, especially rash and inconsiderate Engagements, and slighting of the Sin of them, *There are diverse Vanities*.

14. The Fear of offending God, flowing from the consideration of His Terror, *Job 31. 23*. His Goodness, *Hos. 3. 5*. and especially the experience of His proneness to pardon, *Pf. 130. 4*. is the most kindly and powerful Restraint to keep Men from Sin, the best remedy of their Rashness, and of their Impenitency and Extenuating of it; And the want of this is the cause of all that is here dissuaded from: For as a Remedy inuating the cause of this Distemper, this is here prescribed, *we fear thou God*.

Ver. 8. If thou seest the oppression of the Poor, and violent perverting of Judgement, and Justice in a Province, marvel not at the matter: For he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they. Here

Here is a Sixth Direction for attaining to true Peace and Tranquillity of Mind, the Summ whereof is, That Men should labour to acquiesce unto the powerful Providence of God, ordering all sad Dispensations for the good of them that Fear Him, and so walk in the practice of the former Direction.

And for this end he *First* supposes, that the Godly (of whom; and to whom mainly he speaks here) being *Poor*, and in a very mean condition in the World, will meet with grievous Oppressions from the World, in all their outward enjoyments, and have what is their *Right* both taken and detained from them, as the Word *Oppression* signifies, by the turning of Justice and Law, whence these Oppressed Ones might expect a Redress of former Wrongs, into farther *Violence* and *Oppression* of them.

Next. He dissuads from *Marvelling*, or being Astonished, and *Scupified* (as the Word signifies) at *this Matter*, or as it is in the Original, at *this Will* or *Purpose*, to wit, either the perverse will of wicked Men, and their *Cruel Purposes* driving them on to such Oppression, and Injustice; or rather the Wise and Good *Will* of God, permitting and ordering it to be so for good Ends. So that this Dissuasive is not to be understood as if it were a fault simply to *Admire* Mens Wickedness, and their unreasonable Dealing with *Poor* People: For so Men may safely *marvel at the Matter*, *Isa. 1. 21.* But it is such a *Marvelling* that is here condemned, as hath with it Fretting, and Anxiety flowing from Ignorance, or Inconsideration of the Lord's Wise Ends in permitting of it, as tenderh to *Scupify* (as the Word signifies) and so to discourage the Hearts of the *Poor* in the way of Well-doing.

And *Thirdly*, He presseth this Dissuasive by Three Reasons, *First*, From the Highness or Eminencie of the Lord, in His Power, Justice, and other Perfections; and this he sets forth comparatively, as that which is far *above the highest Oppressours on Earth*. *Secondly*, From His *Regard* unto, or (as the Word sig-

signifies) *watching over* all their Wrongs to Avenge them, and over themselves to Preserve and Reward them, who hold on in His Way notwithstanding of such opposition *Thirty*, From the multitude of Instruments whom the Lord hath to employ, especially the *Angels* (whose Ministry He makes use of, for executing His Judgements upon Proud and Unjust Oppressours) any one of whom is *Higher*, or more eminent for Power, than all the Oppressours in the World, *Iſai. 37. 36.*

Hence Learn 1. They that walk most closely by the Rule of the Word, may expect the worst usage in the World, even to be either by Fraud or *Violence*, Robbed of their outward Comforts, or kept from the possession of what is their own, and while they have recourse to these that are in power for Redress, to see no hopes of Relief from them, but rather to meet with encrease of their Wrongs, and new Injuries from such as should redress them; and that in every place of the Country where they live: For this is the case wherein those to whom the former Direction is given, are supposed to be, *If thou seest the oppression of the Poor, and violent perverting of Judgement and Justice in a Province. &c.*

2. Although the Lord hath given very frequent forewarning of hard usage in the World to his people, having made the same the ordinary Lot of the best of them, *Heb. 11.* And manifested his purpose in permitting it, to be such as may comfort his own *Pſal. 92. 7. Rom. 8. 28.* So as there is no ground for any of them to *Marvel* at such fiery trials, yet so little are his Forewarnings minded by the best *Heb. 12. 5.* so apt are they to promise ease and prosperity to themselves *Pſal. 30. 6.* And so little acquainted with his Wise and Gracious Ends in sad Dispensations *Pſal. 36. 6.* that they are ready to *admire excessively*, to be astonished and perplexed, at the sight of such Dispensations, not knowing what to do. For, their proneness to be so affected with sad Dispensations, is imported in this dissuasive, *If thou seest Oppression, &c. Marvel not at the matter.*

3. They

3. They that would possess true Peace and quietness of Spirit, must resolve to follow their Duty, through variety of grievous injuries from the World for their so doing; and must learn to furnish themselves with such considerations of Gods greatness, and respect to his people, as may make them digest all their sufferings, and *not marvel at them*; And consequently they that would direct people how to intertain true contentment, must not only press their Duty upon them, but also guard their hearts with suitable grounds of encouragement against such Opposition as they may meet with in the World, as here Solomon doth, *Marvel not at the matter, for he that is Highest then the Highest regardeth.*

4. Patient bearing of wrongs, in the way of wel-doing, reverencing the Lord, and acquiescing in his Gracious purpose concerning those, without perturbation or *Marveling* at them, is a mark of a right Worshipper of God, and of one that is principled with the fear of His Name: For after Solomon hath prest right Worship, in publick and secret, and the fear of God as the right fountain thereof, he presteth this, as the evidence or mark of those. *If thou seest Oppression, &c. Marvel not at the matter.*

5. Poor oppressed People, especially the Godly, are not Unregarded by the Lord, as they are apt in that condition to apprehend *Isa. 49. 14.* But he doth carefully Watch over (as the word here translated *Regard* signifies) all their wrongs to rectify them *Psal. 10. 17. 38.* Over their Oppressours to restrain and punish them *Psal. 76. 10.* And over their patient continuance in wel-doing under sufferings, Graciously to reward it in due time *Rev. 3. 10. &c.* For this is one Reason why they should not Marvel at such hard dealing, *Because he who is Highest an the Highest regardeth.*

6. As the Lord is incomparably eminent in all his perfections, his Power, Wisdom and the like, which may be comfortable to his People, and formidable to their Enemies, considering that he hath the Highest on earth under His feet as Grasshoppers

hoppers *Isa* 40. 22. 23. And can easily confound and crush them with a look, so as they shall no more trouble His people, *Exod.* 14. 24. So the consideration of his *Highness*, and the lowness of the greatest on earth being compared with him, should hold up the hearts of them that know him, from sinking under discouragement, and fainting for fear of trouble from the greatest, especially seeing *this High and Lofy One* hath humbled Himself to become theirs by Covenant; For thus is he set forth to guard against the fear of flesh, *He that is Higher than the Highest*. &c.

7. The Lords publick Ministers should make use of these grounds of Comfort, for guarding the hearts of His people against Temptations and Discouragements in their way, wherewith themselves have been comforted by God, see *2 Cor.* 1. 4. For this Ground taken from the Lord's *Greatness*, and *Regard* to his suffering people, which *Solomon* here holds forth to others, for quieting their hearts under trouble, is the same which he had made use of himself in the like case *Eccles.* 3. 16. 17. *Marvel not at the matter, for he that is Higher*, &c.

8. Whensoever the Lord's People are troubled and amazed at the sight or feeling of Oppression, and hard usage in the World, they do not believingly consider God's *Highness*, and *Respect* to His People as they ought: For the consideration of both is here presented to guard them that they *marvel not at this matter*, importing them ready to forget, or not believingly to consider the same, and their so doing to be the cause of that Distemper, *Marvel not at the matter, for he that is Higher than the Highest regardeth*.

9. Though the Lord stand not in need of help from Creatures, for the Protection of His Church, and Destruction of His Enemies; yet He hath made to Himself great Hosts whom He employes for these Ends, that He may honour these Instruments, and help His Peoples Confidence, by the consideration of the number and power of these Glorious and Blessed *Angels* of His,

His, who are His principal Hosts, of whom this last Clause may be safely understood, which is given as a farther (at least as an enlargement of the) former ground of quieting the Hearts of the oppressed Godly. *And there be Higher than they, to wit, than the Oppressours.*

Ver. 9. *Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the King himself is served by the Field.*

THis Verse contains Two Arguments to dissuade from Oppression, against which the Preacher hath guarded these hearts of the Oppressed in the former. The First is, That the *Profits*, or *Increase* (as the Word signifies) of the *Earth*, which it yields to Man over and above his own Subsistence for his Labour, *is for All*; the meaning is, it is the Lord's Allowance to All, to the Poor as well as the Rich: And therefore great Ones should not by Oppression suck all the Profit of the Earth from the Poor, as if it belonged to them only. The Second Reason is, That the greatest on Earth are furnished by the *Field*, or by the *Fruits of the Earth*, yielding Necessaries to them, and to their Beasts, which serve them for Food and Cloathing: And this Furniture coming to their hands, through the Pains and Industry of the *Poor*, they ought nor to be Oppressed by the Great.

Hence Learn 1. The Lord hath so far mitigate the Curse inflicted upon the *Earth* for Man's first Sin, in eating the Forbidden Fruit thereof, that it will yield Increase and Profit to the Labourer for his pains, wherein his Mercy is to be acknowledged: For, saith Solomon, *There is profit of the Earth*, to wit, to the Labourer.

2. The Earth is alike obedient and liberal to All that cultivate it, whatever their Qualifications be, the Lord will not have the Godly and the Wicked differenced, by the different success of their Labours in the Earth, that is common to both: *For the profit of the Earth is for all.*

3. When Great Men that are exempted from Labouring of the Ground, see that the Earth doth answer the poor Labourer, as readily as it would do the King, if he should put his hand to the Plough or Spade, it should bring them to consider that the *Profit* of the poor Man's Labour is the Lord's *Allowance* to him, and so should deter them from robbing him of it by *Oppression*: For this may be taken as an Argument to dissuade from Oppression, *The profit of the Earth is for all.*

4. When poor Labourers of the Ground have nothing for their pains, but what is absolutely necessary for their Subsistence, by reason of the rigid Exactions of their Superiours, they have not then what the Lord allows upon them, which is the *Profit*, or, as the Word signifies, the *Increase*, the Abundance or Overplus, to wit, something to provide for their Posterity, and to imploy for pious Uses. When they have scarce Subsistence though the Earth yields Abundance, their Superiours cannot clear themselves of Oppression: For this is an Argument to dissuade from Oppression, that the *Increase*, or Overplus (as the Word is) *of the Earth is for all.*

5. Proud Oppressours look upon the Profit and Increase of the Poors Labour, as if it were only appointed for them, and the Poor were only their Slaves and Servants, to lay all up for their use, and often would allow nothing to them, but that they see they cannot have their Service, nor acquire any thing to themselves, except the Poor did some way subsist: For this may be looked upon as contradicting the opinion of proud Oppressours, That *The Profit of the Earth* belongs only to them. *The Profit of the Earth is for All.*

6. Kings, and Great Men in the World should consider how they are furnished with Food and Cloathing, even by the Field Blessed from Above, and Cultivated by the Poor, that so they may acknowledge their Superiour, without whose Blessing they would starve, and may be comfortable to, not Oppressours of their Inferiours: For to this end is this said: *The King himself is served by the Field.*

Ver.

Vcr. 10. *He that loveth Silver shall not be satisfied with Silver: nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also Vanity.*

11. *When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?*

IN this second part of the Chapter he dissuades from Covetousness, or the inordinat love of things Worldly, as one main hinderance in the way to Blessedness, concerning which he gave directions in the former part. And this he doth by severall Reasons: The *First* is, That there is no satisfaction to a mans minde in things Worldly, whether *Silver*, under which is comprehended all Coin, or precious Mettal, for which men may get other necessaries, or *Abundance*, to wit, of any other earthly Commodity, though the same *Increase* to never so great a height: whence he inferrs, that for men to give away their hearts unto such things, as their Happines, neglecting the way held forth in the former directions, is *Vanity*, that is, it proves to them, disappointment, and emptiness of Satisfaction. The *Second Reason* (which also proves the former) is, that as men grow in *Riches* of any sort, ordinarily *They are increased that Eat them*, either their Children, Friends or Relations, are multiplied, or at least Objects of Charity, upon whom Gods calls them to lay out some of their Substance, so as they cannot with a good Conscience hoard up their *Abundance*: And *Thirdly*, Though they should, they have no real Advantage by their so doing; even the Rich Master hath nothing more than the Poor Servant who hath Food and Raiment, except only the *Naked sight of what he hath*, which is unworthy to be esteemed his Happines.

Hence Learn. 1. The Immoderat love of Riches is a sin which hath its Judgement in the Bosom of it, the more any one

attain of these things, the more insatiable they are in thirsting after more. The Lord hath given the Spirits of men so large Appetites, as nothing can satisfy them, but himself *who is All in All*, For *he that loveth Silver, shall not be satisfied with Silver.*

2. They that are moderat in their desires after Worldly things, may get a satisfactory measure of them, and though that measure be but small, they may account it sufficient and best for them; yea if they have the true Riches, which are sufficient for their Happinss, even an interest in the Lord, they may be satisfied there with, For it is only *He that loves Silver, and loves Abundance, that Solomon saith shall not be satisfied with either.*

3. Every adorer of Mammon, doth not lay out his love and desires upon the same particular Objects, some worship *Money*; Others who more undervalue that, make their store of *Cattel*, others their *Merchandize*, and others the *Fruits* of the Ground, their Idol; Men cannot free themselves of that sin, though they be free of serving some particular Idoll that others serve, seeing there are variety of Objects for the Covetous Man to pour out his heart upon, and all of them alike unsatisfactory: Therefore doth the wise man here speak of not only *Silver*, but the *Abundance* of any other earthly commodity, *He that loveth Silver shall not be satisfied with Silver, nor he that loveth Abundance with increase.*

4. Not only is the greatest measure of *Silver*, or *Abundance* of other things that any can have unable to give satisfaction, but the growing *Increase* of things of that nature, is as far from giving *Satisfaction* to the heart of him that neglects to seek it in Gods favour and fellowship; For not only is he that loves *Abundance*, without any *Satisfaction* in the *Abundance* he hath, but he shall not be satisfied with *Increase*, Or a growing income of more and more of that sort.

5. It is a great proof of mens Vanity, and proves a great disap-

disappointment and misery to them in the end, that *they spend their Money for that which is not Bread, and their Labour for that which satisfies not*. For this is the Censure, and sentence of the Spirit of God, past upon such a course. *This also is Vanity.*

6. So unreasonable is that lust of Covetousness, that it makes men who are under the power of it, apprehend *Satisfaction* to be had in that which could not but *Increase* their Anxiety if they had it. They imagine if there were none but themselves to enjoy things earthly, they would be happy, and if it were so, how miserable would they be? For this their imagination is imported, while it is given for a Reason of their unsatisfaction, that the contrary of it comes to pass, *As goods increase, they are Increased that eat them.*

7. It is a clear mark of a Covetous Worldling who hath *Mammon* for his God, that he desires to enhance all to himself, and cannot willingly give out any thing to an other though of nearest Relation to him, or such as God calls him to give out unto, without great Vexation, and Increase of his Unsatisfaction; For this is a Reason why His Abundance satisfies him not, because Providence orders it so, that *When his Goods are increased, they are increased that eat them*, And this *Increase* the covetous mans Vexation.

8. That which doth increase the contentment of a man mortified to the World, increases the Anxiety of a worshipper of *Mammon*. It is a great comfort to a Child of God, when *Abundance* of the World is laid to his hand, that Providence offers him many fit Objects upon whom to employ it; But to the Covetous Worldling it is a Vexation to see the number growing to whom he ought to give, and from whom he cannot with a good Conscience withhold, and yet cannot get an heart to give, as is imported in this Reason of his unsatisfaction with his *Increase*, that *when Goods increase, they are increased that eat them.*

9. God doth never give a man Riches, and abundance of things Worldly, to hoard up beside him, but when soever his

Provi -

Providence brings in to him *Abundantly* of these things, the same Providence affords Objects upon whom he is bound to lay out a part thereof: Either his Children are multiplyed, or the number of his Servants and Followers is increased, or the Poor run and flock about him, or some occurrences of Providence, meet him, that will, if he do as he ought, *eat up* a considerable part of his increase; for this is a general truth, *as Goods increase, they are increased that eat them.*

10. Beside what men make use of for their subsistence, and that which they are bound to give out to others, or imploy for necessary uses, there is no true pleasure or profit by all that men have in the World, yea they have nothing but *the naked sight of them*, which signifies little; the consideration whereof should make men see their *Vanity* in seeking these things as their chief Happiness: For this is the last Reason to this purpose, *what is there (to wit beside what is necessary for a mans subsistence and to bestow upon approved uses) To the Owner, beside the beholding of them with his Eyes?*

Ver. 12. *The sleep of a Labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to Sleep.*

HERE are two farther Arguments to dissuade from the immoderate love of things earthly; The one is taken from the advantage of moderate diligence about these things, *The Sleep of a Labouring man is sweet*, saith he. By the *Labouring man* here spoken of, is meant mainly, 1. Such an one as for all his Labour hath but little of the World among his hands, as appears by this, that he is opposed to the *Rich*, who hath *Abundance*. Yct 2. He is such an one as is supposed to be Labouring also for the true Riches, otherwise if he were a Covetous Wretch, his want and care to get, would make him as unquiet as the others *Abundance*, but being moderate in diligence about

about his outward calling, and serious in seeking the true Riches, he hath *sweet Sleep* and Rest both to Body and Spirit: and this he hath, though he have but a light Supper; his painful Labour, and his good Conscience makes *his Sleep refreshful*, and if he eat more, the Blessing of God upon his Healthy constitution, makes digestion easie, and so however it be with him, *his Sleep is Sweet*.

The other Argument is taken from that Anxiety which ordinarily attends the *Abundance* of things Worldly, in those who seek them as their best portion: *But the Abundance of the Rich* (saith Solomon) *will not suffer him to Sleep*. By the *Rich* must be understood, not simply every man who hath *Abundance*, for Godly Rich men, such as *Abraham* and *Job* were, have rest to Body and Spirit allowed upon them; But the *Covetous Rich*, who thorow excessive love to the World, cares and Anxieties about keeping, and fears of losing, deprive themselves of the Lords allowance to men. And both the expressions in this verse are to be understood of what doth *Ordinarily* fall out, seeing the Lord may correct and exercise his own dearest people with unquietness, and may and doth sometimes plague the *Rich* with false peace, and rest of Body and Spirit.

Hence Learn. 1. Oftimes these who doth most painfully and honestly Labour in their Callings, remain *Poor* in things Worldly, not only because such are often preyed upon by *Oppressours*, but because the Lord having provided better things for them, will have them by the want of these outward things stirred up to seek for better, and to depend upon him for their daily Bread; For, Solomon opposeth the honest *Labourer* to the *Rich who hath Abundance*, as if the *Poor* and *Labourer* were one, as ordinarily they are, *The sleep of the Labouring man &c.* *But the Abundance of the Rich, &c.*

2. Natural rest or sound Sleep, not interrupted by Distempers of Body or Soul, is a sweet Mercy of God, whereby men are separat from the sight and feeling of the Miseries of this life;

life; And the same being sanctified, they are by it refreshed, and recreated in Body and Spirit, for the farther service of the Lord; For as a *Sweet* Blessing to the poor Labourer that fears God, it is here spoken of, *The Sleep of the Labouring man is sweet.*

3. The busier men be in honest and moderat Labour in their Callings, the *Sweeter* ordinarily is their *Rest and Sleep*, which God vouchsafes upon them, their diligence disposes their Bodies for *Rest*, and their moderation and honest Labour prevents challenges which Conscience might suggest to marr their *Rest*. The consideration whereof should make men digest the pains of lawful diligence, and make them beware to take a surfeit of it, or to marr the peace of their Conscience, which may marr the *Sweetness* of their *Rest and Sleep*, which God allows upon them: For, it is of him who *Labours* painfully and moderately, that *Solomon* here saith, *The Sleep of a Labouring man is Sweet.*

4. As any man, especially a *Labourer* ought sometimes to take a more sparing measure of the creatures, as when providence orders their success to be less than ordinary, or calls them to distribute a part of their allowance to some others of his poor people; so may they at other times make use of them more liberally (always keeping themselves within the bounds of Sobriety) as when the Lord Blesses their Labour with greater success, and in his providence carves out more work for them, for which their Bodies must be proportionally upheld, and strengthened by the Creatures: For, *Solomon* here supposes the *Labourer* upon good Grounds, to eat sometimes *More*, sometimes *Less*, while he saith, *his Sleep is sweet, whether he eat little or much.*

5. The Lord can make it go as well with the Bodies of his poor *Labouring* people, and with their Spirits also, when they have little to eat, or find themselves obliged to eat more sparingly, as at other times when they have *Much*, and may eat more liberally, so that their *Rest and quietness of Spirit*, is to be attributed,

attributed, not to the things they make use of, but to his Blessing, the light of whose Countenance makes *their Sleep sweet* and sound *Psal. 4. 8.* For, *the sleep of a Labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much.*

6. Beside eternal Torment, and Unrest abiding men who have chosen their portion in this World, they have oft the earnest of that everlasting unquietness given them in this life, many unquiet nights and vexing thoughts, about the keeping and increasing of what they have, which are so many Messengers to warn them of their Folly, in choosing such a God to serve, as cannot give his Worshippers a *sound and sweet Sleep*, and in neglecting to serve him, who will *give his Beloved Sleep*, when it may be good for them; For, (saith Solomon) *the abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to Sleep.*

7. When mens hearts are so distracted with cares and fears about things Worldly, that they are thereby deprived of the ordinary *Rest* and Refreshment, which God allows to the Sons of men in the night time; then it is evident *Mammon* is their Idol, and their *Abundance* is a curse and snare to them; For, *Solomon* gives it for a mark of the Covetous, *his Abundance will not suffer him to Sleep.*

Ver. 13. *There is a sore evil which I have seen under the Sun, namely, Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their hurt.*

THE sixth Argument serving to alienate the hearts of men from the excessive love of things Worldly, is, that they prove often *hurtful to the Owners*, exposing them to many hazards from others, and being occasion of much sin to themselves, as shall be shewn in the Doctrines: And this *Solomon* regrates as a woful evil, and yet evident to him, and very ordinary among men, that they do pursue these things, which prove *Hurtful* to them, as if their chief Happiness were in the enjoyment of them.

Hence Learn. 1. The Lords Ministers should be much in

the Observation of the event of mens sinful courses, that none of the Lords disappointments of men therein may elcape them, that so they may hold out his truth as verified in their own Experience: So will they have the more confidence in speaking, and their Doctrine will have the more weight with people. For so did the *Preacher* who is in many things of this sort a pattern for ordinary Preachers; he holds forth the danger of Coverousness, as a thing which he had observed ordinary among men. *There is a sore evil which I have seen, namely Riches kept to the Owners thereof for their hurt.*

2. A spiritual Discerner will look upon mens sinful Courses, which tend to their *Ruine*, not with pleasure as the sinners themselves do, but with grief and compassion: They will look upon sinners as men pining away under some grievous sickness, while they are with full delight serving their Idols; For so doth *Solomon*, *This is a sore evil* (or as the word signifies, a deadly Disease, or sorrowful Evil) *Which I have seen under the Sun, namely Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their hurt.*

3. Though sometimes the Lord blasts Worldly mens substance and possessions by a secret *Moth*, *Hos. 5. 12.* And sometimes by *sending Spoilers at noonday upon them*, *Jer. 15. 8.* to testify his displeasure with their placing Happiness in so bale things, and preferring them to his favour and fellowship; Yet at other times he doth suffer them to enjoy their Idols safely, and even then is not the less displeased with them: for so had *Solomon* observed, *Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their hurt.*

4. Though wicked men have not a sanctified title to their possessions, being nothing is given them from special love, yet they may be called the *True Owners* of them, both by human or *Civil Right*, and by a *Divine* also, so that none may take their Estates from them (except Magistrates in the Execution of Just Laws) under the pain of Gods displeasure. *Job. 9. 24. Hab. 2. 6.* Nor is it suitable to Scripture Language, to deny all wicked men to have any true Title to their possessions, and

to look upon them as belonging to the Saints; for the Spirit of God speaks of them as the *Masters and Owners* of these things, *I have seen Riches kept for the Owners thereof.* &c.

5. That which wicked Men account their chief Good, namely the keeping of their Possessions and Riches, is truly their great *Hurt*, not only in so far as these things expose them to be the Objects of others Malice and Envy, which may befall the best; 1 *King*: 21. 6, 7, 8. But mainly because they prove *Snares* to their Souls, occasioning many Temptations to them, 1 *Tim*. 6. 9. and particularly marring their love to, and profiting by the Word. *Mat*. 13. 22. The consideration whereof should guard Mens Hearts against the immoderate love of these things: For it is here brought as an Argument to that purpose, *I have seen Riches kept for the Owners thereof to their Hurt.*

Ver. 14. *But these Riches perish by evil travel: and he begetteth a Son, and there is nothing in his hand.*

Solomon having reasoned against Covetousness from the *Hurt* that Worldlings sustain by their Riches while they enjoy them; he giveth here a Seventh Argument against the same, from the hazard of losing these things which they have kept for a long time (he speaks of what frequently falls out) and that by *evil Travel*, that is, the Lord either blasts them by some *fore Judgement* (for the Word *Travel* is often Translated *Affliction*) or leaves the Person that hath long kept them foolishly and sinfully to waste them: Unto which and many other Casualties Riches being subject, they are not to be sought after as a Man's Happiness. And this Argument he illustrates by shewing the consequence of the *Perishing* of these Riches after this manner, namely that the *Son* of this Covetous Wretch hath nothing to wit, of Patrimony which his Father with the hazard of his Soul did conqueise, *in his hand*, that is, in his Power and Possession) as the Expression frequently signifies in Scripture, *Dan*.

19. 38.) *Seing all is now supposed to be perished by evil Travel:* So that this Expression, *He begets a Son, and there is nothing in his hand,* cannot be understood of the ordinary case and condition wherein all Children are born, of which he speaks as a new Argument in the following Words, but of the poor Case that the Son of the Covetous is oft in, after his Fathers Riches are *Perished*; and this as an Argument to dissuade from Covetousness, seing thereby Men take the nearest Way, not only to *Hurt* their own Souls, but to lose their Estates, and make their *Posterity* miserable.

Hence Learn 1. They who immoderately love the things of this Earth, do not only hurt their own Souls by their so doing, but likewise they take the most effectual Course they can, to destroy that which they would most gladly keep, and so to impoverish themselves and their *Off-spring*, for even these Riches which *Solomon* had observed to have been for a long time kept to the *Owners hurt*, he here asserts to be *subject to Perish by evil Travel*.

2. The sinful Courses that Men take to preserve their Estates, such as Oppression, *Isa. 5. 8.* Lying and Dissimulation, *Act. 5. 1, 2. &c.* *Serving the time, by making Ship-wreck of a good Conscience,* *1 Tim. 6. 10.* Do often prove in Gods Righteous Judgment, a Mean to make all they have *Perish*. The observation whereof may make Men who love their Estates best, hate to take any sinful course for keeping of them: For this *Evil Travel* may be safely understood of the sinful Courses Men take to preserve their Estates, *But those Riches perish by evil Travel.*

3. It is just with God to leave Men to spend prodigally upon their Lusts what they have sinfully purchased, or sought after as their chief Good, or kept to the *Hurt* and Prejudice of their Souls: For of these sinful Ways whereby Men consume their own Substance, as well as of these whereby they labour to keep the same, this Clause may be understood, *But those Riches perish by evil Travel.*

4. The

4. The Lord hath many ways to blast Covetous Mens Idols, beside the Courses themselves take formerly mentioned, tending to the ruine of their Estates; he can make use of the Injustice and Avarice of Spoilers and Oppressours, the deceitfulness of Friends, and the prodigality of Children, to make their Riches Perish: Therefore doth Solomon express the Casualties whereunto Riches are subject, under this general Clause, *These Riches perish by evil Travel*, importing all these ways formerly mentioned, and many others.

5. The Lord may write His Displeasure with the sinful conquest of Covetous Men, upon the poor and outwardly miserable condition of their Off-spring, the nature of which Dispensation may be changed to the Sons or Heirs of such, if they seek better things for their Portion, than their Fathers have done: For it is here set down as the consequent of God's Blasting the Estates of Covetous Worldlings, and To a sign of His Displeasure with their Sin, *That they beget Sons who have nothing in their Hand*, or in their Power, to wit, of all that their Fathers gathered, and kept so carefully for them.

6. These Children for whom Parents are providing great Estates by Covetousness, or sinful Courses, ought to look upon them as very uncertain, and if they be truly Wise, will lay their account to provide for themselves otherwise: For here the Estate of the Man who kept it long to his own Souls Hurt, is now Perished by evil Travel, and the Son whom he hath begotten hath nothing in his Hand.

Ver. 15. *As he came forth of his Mothers womb, naked shall he Return, so go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his Hand.*

16. *And thus also is a sore Evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go; and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?*

17. *All his dayes also he eateth in darkness; and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.*

Those

THese Words contain two farther Arguments to abate Mens immoderate Desires after the things of this World: The First is taken from the necessity of his parting with All: And this he insists upon and clears. 1. By comparing Mans case while he entereth into the World, with his condition in going out of it, that as he brought no Money, or Possessions into the World with him, so must he go out of it without them, and not carry so much as an handful with him, that can be of any use to him in the other World, he is said to *Return* (as it were whence he came) because he Goes in a manner back to an Estate like unto that which he was in, before he came into the World, as to his being deprived of worldly Enjoyments, to the *Womb* of our *Common Mother* the Earth. 2. By regretting as it were the great guilt, and woful condition of Men who imbrate these things for their portion, which is to them a *fore Evil* both of Sin and Punishment; And while he saith, *In all points he must Go as he Came*, it cannot be taken without limitation: For it is sure the Covetous Worldling, though he take not a Farthing of his Money out of the World with him; yet he takes hence a load of Guilt, beside what he brought into the World with him; but the meaning is *In all points*, as to his being stript of his worldly Possessions and Comforts, he came Poor, Naked, and Weeping into the World, and so must he go out of it. And 3. By alarming the Conscience of this inconsiderat Worldling with a Question, *What profit hath he*, to wit, mainly at his Departure, *in labouring for that*, which he can no more hold fast than the *Wind*, nor be more refreshed with, than an hungry Man can be fed with the *Wind*. And this same Argument in substance is made use of by the Apostle to the same purpose, *1 Tim. 6. 7.*

The other Argument is taken from the sorrowful and comfortless Case of the Covetous Worldling, in the mean time while he doth enjoy his god *Mammon*, set forth in several Expressions. 1. *All his dayes he eats in Darkness*: *Darkness* is frequent-

quently put in Scripture for the privation of Comfort, *Ma.* 12. 10. And so it is here, even the best of his dayes, he hath not the least grain of true spiritual Comfort, in comparison whereof his carnal Mirth is but *Darkness*. And not only is he deprived of true Comfort. But 2. *He hath much sorrow*, to wit, always much matter of Sorrow, and often the feeling of it. And 3. *He hath much Wrath*, by which is meant especially his fretting at Dispensations of Providence, and Instruments that marr his worldly Desires and Expectations. And 4. these he hath mixed, *With his Sickness*, or Distemper and loathing of Spirit, which is the ordinary frame of Spirit in the Covetous. So the summ is, That Men most part with All their Riches, and can have no true Comfort, but much *Wo* by them, if they seek them as their Happiness: And therefore it were wisdom in them to draw their Hearts away from them.

Hence Learn 1. The consideration of our poor and naked Estate when we enter into this World, and the absolute necessity of going out of it the same way, stript of all earthly Comforts, should wean our Hearts from the excessive love of things earthly; seing we brought Nothing with us, we should possess All as free Gifts, and so love the Giver more than them, imploy them for His Glory, and resign them willingly to Him when He calls for them: And seing we Go away *Naked*, and can carry nothing hence with us, we should look upon nothing as our own, we should be careful to go away clothed with *Christ's* Righteousness, and adorned with His Grace, which is the durable Riches and Righteousness, which whosoever hath shall not be found naked in Death, nor after it: And we should do that in our time that may go with us, and comfort us in the gracious Reward thereof, *Rev.* 14. 13. For to this effect is the consideration of both represented to Man here, *As he came forth of his Mothers womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour that he may carry away in his hand.*

2. The most common and obvious Truths, which can hardly escape the consideration of any who have the use of Reason, may be blest for producing saving Effects upon the Hearts of men, and therefore should be considered by them, and for that end represented and insisted upon by the Lords Ministers; for here that which none can be Ignorant of, is held forth to convince Men of their Vanity in seeking an Earthly Happiness, and to draw them to seek better things, *That as Man Came Naked into the World, so must he Return, &c.*

3. It is both the guilt of the Children of men, that they embrace the Dung-hill, and choice Earthly Trifles for their Portion, while the Blessed God, his Grace and Glory are in their offer; And the same is also their woful Punishment justly inflicted upon them, for despising such an offer: For both of the evil of Sin and Punishment this is to be understood, *This is a fore evil, that in all points, as he Came, so shall he Go.* Not as if this Dispensation were evil, but that *Man should Labour for the Wind*, Neglecting the Substance, seeing *He must Go as he Came: This is the fore evil.*

4. If covetous Worldlings would commune often with their own Hearts, if they would exercise their Reason, and put their Conscience to tell what true Advantage they have, by pouring out their Hearts upon the Earth and the things thereof, they could not but see their way to be no less unreasonable and unprofitable for attaining to Happiness, than if a man would make it the business of his Life to gather *Wind*, which cannot be held, though it be among his Hands, nor can satisfy him, though he could hold it: But such serious Thoughts are banished by Worldly minded Men; and therefore Ministers should urge their Consciences to speak to this purpose, as is imported in this question, *What profit hath he, that hath Laboured for the Wind?*

5. Whatever deluded apprehensions the Worldling hath of Pleasure and Comfort in his Possessions, and pursue after more, he

he hath not the leaſt grain of true Comfort all his Life-time, he hath not a truly Comfortable Meal, nor a good day, ſuppoſe it were the day of his Coronation, and Conqueſt of Kingdoms: How much better is the Caſe of a poor Believer in Jeſus Chriſt, who though he be judged by Worldlings, the moſt Comfortleſs man in the World, yet eats his Bread with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of Heart, *Mat. 1. 46.* And may have every day the Feaſt of a good Conſcience, *Prov. 15. 15.* For, of the covetous, the Spirit of the Lord ſaith thus, *All his dayes he Eats in Darkneſs.*

6. Though many Worldlings be inſenſible of the matter of Sorrow which they have, though they can feign joy, and put a fair face upon a Spirit gnawn with inward Challenges, yet have they *much Sorrow*, they are ſtill ſowing the Seeds of Sorrow, and all they do, tends to ripen it; and ſometimes they have paines of Conſcience, in the fearful expectation of Judgement and Wrath; for (ſaith Solomon), *He Eats in Darkneſs, and bath much Sorrow.*

7. Covetous men are ordinarily men of fiery and fretting Diſpoſitions, their Paſſions are moved when the Word ſpeaks againſt their Idolatry, they are enraged againſt thoſe who crave either in Juſtice, or in Charity any thing from them, and repine at theſe Diſpenſations of Providence, which either impede their Projects for more of the World, or threaten the removal of what they have, in which reſpects the Covetous man is here ſaid to have *Much Wrath.*

8. Whatever outward Health a Covetous Miſer may have, yet is he ordinarily in a Diſtemper of Spirit, pined away with Gnaſes how to gather more Riches, Anxious Fears of loſing what he hath, and *Vexation of Spirit* upon diſappointment of his Projects for increaſe of his Wealth: And theſe often have influence upon his Body and Natural Spirits, to make theſe Sick and Languid, eſpecially while he denies himſelf the comfortable uſe of the Creatures, and keeps his Spirit ſtill upon

the rack, with his Cares and Fears, in which respect he is all a sick dying man, and *Flash much wrath with his Sickness.*

Ver. 18. *Behold that which I have seen: It is good and comely for one to Eat, and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his Labour that he taketh under the Sun; all the dayes of his Life, which God giveth him: for it is his Portion.*

19. *Every man also to whom God hath given Riches, and Wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his Portions, and to rejoice in his Labour, this is the gift of God.*

20. *For he shall not much remember the days of his Life, because God answers him in the joy of his Heart.*

LEst the former directions concerning the right Worshipping of God, and Arguments disswading from the inordinat love of Riches, might be mistaken, as setting men upon a *Rigid, Severe, and Comfortless* way of Living; *Solomon* doth in the last part of the Chapter, commend at large the Holy and chearful use of the outward comforts of this Life; And for this end he doth *First* call all to consider what himself had seen or observed in his own Experience, to wit, that *it is good, not mans Chief, but Subordinat good, fitting him for a higher, the Glorifying and Injoying of God; and Comely, or that which Beautifieth* (as the word signifies) to wit, in the Eyes of others, the way of Religion prest in the former part of the Chapter, that a *Man should Eat and Drink*. By which words he doth not commend *Sensuality* or excess, but a *free and Holy Use* of the Creatures (men keeping themselves within the bounds of Sobriety, and proportioning their use of the Creatures to the Lords Blessing of their Labour) for cherishing of the natural Life while God continues it; This (saith he) *is a mans Portion, not his Test*, for that is the Lord Himself Reconciled with him

in Christ, but a *Temporary Portion*, or reward of his Labour, carved out to him (as the word *Portion* signifies) for upholding his outward man in his Masters Service.

Next, He shews that when God hath given to a man abundance of outward things, and hath withal superadded this favour, that *he hath given him power to use them*, which consists not only in a mans natural Health, whereby he is in a capacity to make use of creature comforts, but also in the freedom of his Spirit from Anxiety, Niggardlines, or scruples of conscience in using them, so as he is not enslaved to his Possessions but is made a Master or Lord of them (As the word, *to give Power* signifies) and hath Wisdom to take them proportionally and suitably to his Rank and Imployment, which is to take his *Portion*, and so chearfully to follow his Duty, Rejoicing that he is enabled for the same; *This (saith he) is a free Gift of God.* to wit, a new Gift superadded to all his wealth and Riches

VER. 19.

And Thirdly, He giveth the Reason why men should study this holy and chearful use of the Creatures, taken from the advantage he shall have thereby, *namely he shall not much remember the days of his Life*, whereby is meant, that he shall not be vexed with the thoughts of his by-past crosses, or solicitous how to wrestle thorow his future: And that because, while he follows his present duty chearfully, taking the Lords allowance of outward comforts for that end, the Lord will answer his Prayers and pains, by giving him spiritual Joy, and making his heart glad in himself, and his allowance to him.

Hence Learn, 1. Not only do the Lords people stand in need of direction how to go about Religious performances, but likewise how to use aright their common Comforts, even their meat, Drink and other refreshments of that nature, considering that they are in hazard to be taken with many snares in these, and that there is Communion to be had with God in the right use of them, as well as in Acts of immediat Worship:

And therefore it is a necessary part of a Ministers work to direct peoples carriage herein: And people as they love their own peace, should study the right use of these things. For after Solomon hath taught the right manner of worship in the first part of the Chapter, he comes here in the last, to set people upon the right way of using their common mercies. *Behold, &c. It is good for one to eat and to drink. &c.*

2. Christ's Ministers should be no less careful to point out the lawful liberty of the Lords people, and shew them how large his allowance to them is; even in the use of outward comforts, than to shew them the hazard of inordinat love to, and excess in the use of these things: and consequently the Lords people should be as careful to know, and take their allowance in the holy and chearful use of Creature comforts, as they should be attentive lest they exceed in their love of, and delight in them, considering that Satan studies to drive them from one extrem, to another: And as he takes occasion from their lawful liberty, to drive them to excess, So from the Doctrine of Mortification, especially when it is strained too high, or not qualified with the Doctrine of Christian Liberty In the use of lawful comforts, either to make them look upon Religion, as a severe and rigid task, prejudicial to their natural life, and the comforts of it, Or to make them without Ground scrupulous, and with fear and doubting to use these things, which, if they knew the Lords allowance, and the right way of using them, they might use with a quiet and good Conscience. Therefore the Spirit of the Lord, after he hath directed Solomon by many Arguments to dissuade from the inordinat love of Riches, in the second part of this Chapter, he brings him in the close, to commend the Holy and comfortable use of the Creatures. *Behold that which I have seen, it is good and comely for one to eat and drink and enjoy Good, &c.*

3. Though the pretence of the best mens Experience of the good of any course, be a very slender commendation of it, if there

there be no farther, seeing men are so easily deceived; Yet Ministers should put truths they hold forth to the Trial of their own Experience, and should be very careful Observers what true advantage may be found in any course or practice they commend, that they themselves may taste of it, and see it, and so may with greater Zeal and confidence call others to try the same. and their commendation of it coming thorow a heart seasoned with the sweetness thereof, it may be the sweeter to them, that hath their senses exercised. For so doth Solomon here commend this way from his own Experience: *Behold that which I have seen, is good and comely, &c.*

4. Though nothing lower than the injoyment of the Ever-blessed God, be a mans chief good; yet there is a subordinat inferiour Good, in the right use of the most common comforts of this life, such as *Meat, Drink* and the like, in so far as the same are used to keep the Body in health and strength, and to chear the natural Spirits in doing the Lord service; For Solomon saith *he saw this, that it is good for a man to eat and Drink &c.* to wit, in this sense, and for this end.

5. As the hearty, chearful and holy use of allowed Creature comforts, is a thing that beautifies Religion, and makes Christians lovely to Onlookers, so are they bound to study the same for that very end, and not to look only to what is good for themselves, but also to what is Comely to others, or may allure and gain them to fall in love with the way of Religion. For Solomon here commends the Holy and chearful use of allowed comforts from this, that as it is Good to the person so using them, so it is Comely to others: *Behold* (saith he) *that which I have seen, that it is good* (to wit, for a mans self mainly) *and Comely* (or as the word signifies Beautiful, namely in the sight of others) *that a man should Eat and Drink, and enjoy the good of his Labour.*

6. Though some be exempted from *Hande-Labour* or servile employments, 1 Cor. 9. 6. yet there is no man exempted from

from Labour of one sort or other, nor can any cheerfully and with a good Conscience, take the comfort of Gods Creatures, who being in a capacity to Labour, and having the opportunity thereof, neglects the same, and so loves to live upon the good of other mens Labours, and not his own, (for saith Solomon) *It is good and Comely that a man should Eat and Drink, but in so doing he should see that he Injoy the Good of his own Labour, which He takes under the Sun &c.*

7. As there is no day of a mans Life, wherein he is able to Labour excepting the days which are the Lords, to wit the Sabbath, and other days set a part for his Worship, wherein he is excemed from some lawful and honest Labour; So mans Painful Labour (as the Word signifies) is only during this Life, *under the Sun*, his rest from his Labour is *above the Sun*, whether his Works shall follow him. For (saith Solomon) *It is good for a man to Eat and Drink and Injoy the Good of his Labour, which he takes under the Sun, all the days of his Life.*

8. As every day of a Mans Life should be taken for a new Gift of God, and so should be spent in Honouring and serving him, so all the Good which he Injoys of his Labour, should be looked upon as a Gift of God also, though the same be acquired by never so much Labour of his, seeing the strength to Labour, and the success of Labour is from the Lord, for this clause, (*which God giveth him*) may be safely referred, either to the Good of his Labour, which he takes, or to the *days of his Life, under the Sun*, wherein he Labours and Injoys that Good, both *which God giveth him.*

9. As they that have abundance of the World, have but a part thereof allowed upon them for their own use, there being several parts thereof appropriated by the Lord for other uses, some for the poor *Ecl. 11. 2.* some for publick Religious Uses *Isai. 23. 18.* some for mens near Relations *1 Cor. 12. 24.* especially their Posterity, and those of their *Household* *1 Tim. 5. 8.* So the Lords allowing a man a part for himself, which he

he may use comfortably, should be the main Ground whereupon he takes comfort in the use thereof. For this word (*his Portion*) signifies that part which is separat from other parts of the Fruit of his *Labour*, and is given as a Reason why he should take that chearfully, seeing it is carved out to him by the Lord, *For this is his Portion.*

10. As mens Wealth and Riches are Gods Gift, So the power to use these for strengthening them in his service is a second Gift, and Wisdom to take their own due *Portion*, neither defrauding themselves of their own allowance, nor others to whom they are bound to give a part of theirs, is a third Gift: And the Grace to comfort themselves in so doing is a Fourth. And so the Lord should be acknowledged and depended upon for our daily Bread, for our Appetite after it, for the heart to take and use it, for Wisdom and Grace, to take neither more nor less than our own allowance of it, and to take that chearfully: For we find many Gifts here spoken of, *every man to whom God hath given Wealth*, and *hath given him power to eat*, and to take his Portion, and to Rejoice, this is the Gift of God.

11. Men may have a right to *Abundance* of Riches, and have them in their possession also, and yet not be *Masters* of any thing they have, but held as Captives to their Wealth, and not be able to use it: For this expression, *And hath given him power to Eat thereof*, is in the Original, to make him *Master* or Lord, or give him the Dominion over what he hath, This must be a *New Gift* of God, superadded to his *Abundance*, else it doth him no good.

12. The Child of God hath not only matter of rejoicing in the success of his Labour, and profit of his Pains, but in his very *Labour* it self, though never so painful, not as it is his *own Labour*, but in so far as he is strengthened for lawful and honest diligence, and the same is blest with success to make him subsist for farther Service to God in his Generation: For this is one of the Gifts which God bestows upon his Child, that he

he should (not *use* himself because he hath not farther success, but) *Rejoice in his Labour, it is the gift of God.*

13. As it is Man's duty, and a special part of Heavenly Wisdom, to be mindful of the shortness of his days, and the Misery incident to him, that he may timeously provide for a better Life, by making sure his Reconciliation with God, *Pf. 90. 12.* So it is a great Sin to be anxiously careful and solicitous, how to subsist for the time to come, *Mat. 6. 34.* to be so vexed with the apprehension of future sad days, as to discourage our selves in our present duty, and marr our Comfort in the Lord's Allowance, for the time: For it is here spoken of as a special advantage which comes by Man's chearful taking of his Allowance, in following his duty, *That he shall not much remember the days of his life.*

14. The way to sweeten Man's short and sorrowful Life, to banish the sad thoughts of by-past Crosses, and the fearful forecasting of future, is much correspondence with God, frequent praying for Refreshment from Heaven, and taking every comfortable passage of Scripture, or Providence, which cheers the Heart in God's Service, for a *joyful Answer* from God: For it is he that shall not much *Remember the days of his life*, whom God *Answers*, and God's answering presupposes Correspondence with, or Prayer to Him.

15. To *Rejoice* in following our present duty, and commit future Events to God, is the way to get a good account of our Prayers: Then the Heart is put in such a Blest Frame, that nothing is sought, nor esteemed matter of Joy, but what may Please and Honour God, and then God Answers that Man according to the Joy of his Heart, to wit, the Man that *Rejoices in his Labour*, that is, his Duty to God, takes his Allowance from God chearfully, and is not anxious concerning the dayes of his Life.

C H A P. VI.

THE ARGUMENT

SOLOMON in prosecution of the former purpose, doth in this Chapter First, Discover jointly the Sin and Misery of the worldly minded Man, unto the 9. Ver. And 1. That in his serious observation and experience he had found it common and frequent in the World, That the Covetous Wretch, tho the Lord had in the course of His common Providence bestowed on him variety and plenty of outward things, even (as to the substance of them) according to the desire of his heart; yet was he deprived of the comfortable use of these Enjoyments, which often is reserved for those who had no interest in him, or were enemies to him: Which condition he censureth as void of true satisfaction, and a plague consuming both Body and Spirit. ver. 1, 2. 11. That this wretched Worldling, tho he have both a numerous Offspring and long life, yet wanting the true good and comfort of the Creatures, and the chief good of his Soul, and possibly not honoured with a Burial suitable to his desires or condition; An untimely Birth, on many external accounts (not mentioning the future or eternal estate wherein an untimely Birth as the worst hath also the advantage of the Covetous Man) is preferable unto him. ver. 3. In regard (1) of his Birth: For he cometh into the World not only loaden with Sin, but for no good end and purpose to himself, bearing the sad effects of his Original Guilt within time (which an untimely Birth, tho guilty also of Original Sin doth not) and hath it sadly charged home upon him. ver. 4. (2) As to his Death, which as it may be very obscure and Comfortless here, so doth it lead to utter Darknes hereafter. ver. 4. (3) In respect of his Name, which shall be unfavoury both with God and Man. ver. 4. (4) On the account of the restlessness and perplexity of his condition, being distracted with these cares and fears, which an untimely Birth, is not capable of. ver. 5. (5) Tho he should have the continuance of Life for thousands of years, added to all his other Enjoyments; yet being a Stranger to God and Fellowship with him (wherein Man's true Good consisteth) he is but still a miserable Man. ver. 6. And (6) In respect, that notwithstanding all his advantages; yet he and the Abortive, or any other whom he judges miserable in regard of himself, must tarry all in one place, the grave or state of the Dead. ver. 6. 11. That notwithstanding all the advantages this Worldy-Worm hath; yet the great design and refusal of all his Undertakings and Pains is low and base, being for the Mouth and

Other carnal ends, which as he is often disappointed in, so neither can he thereby satisfy his greedy Longings: ver. 7. IV. That tho with his wisdom he may gain to himself great Riches, Honours and Pleasures, yet being destitute of that Wisdom which is from above, he is as far distant from true Happiness as he that is reckoned a Fool. ver. 8. Upon occasion of which he cautions the poor Men, who wanting saving Wisdom and the true Riches, yet have some measure of Moral Prudence to direct their way before Men, that they be not proud of their poverty, or count themselves the more happy, when they thus hear of the Misery and Folly of the rich Covetous Man. ver. 8.

And Secondly, In the rest of the Chapter he giveth several Reasons why People should not hunt so hotly after these earthly things, to the neglect of the pursuit after true Happiness. I. Because the quiet and contented (i. e. short) enjoyment of the Portion which God gives Men in the World, is far more advantageous both for their Spiritual and Temporal Condition, than the inordinat ranging of the heart from Creature to Creature, seeking satisfaction and that contentment which they cannot give. ver. 9. II. Because as this too eager and endless pursuit after the Creature, is a course that not only will prove the Creature is self vain, and empty of all true Contentment, but Man himself to be vain and foolish in seeking Satisfaction where it is not to be had, so will it be found to be a Vexation and Torment to the Spirit. ver. 9. III. Because constant experience doth shew, That any success such eager and endless pursuits after the World for Happiness hath, is already made known by the Spirit of God, here and else where in the Word, to be but Vanity; which (as may be notour to all) cannot be attributed to the Creature, which neither is able, nor ever was ordained to afford true Content and Happiness; But to frail dying Man, with whom God in His holy Purpose and Providence hath kept this constant course (the contrary whereof cannot be instanced) that whoever sought Happiness in the Creature, should come off with nothing but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. ver. 10. IV. Because by seeking Happiness in the Creatures, Men do state themselves in opposition and contradictory terms to the Almighty, which will be found neither to be their wisdom nor their safety. ver. 10. V. Because by so doing Man is not only no whit nearer, but considerably farther from his true Happiness, and nothing bettered by all these foolish Chases. ver. 11. VI. Because as a Man's Life is both short and uncertain, and so is to be better employed than in seeking Happiness in the Creatures; So it is no more dubious what condition in the World, whether of Prosperity or Adversity, will contribute most for his designed Satisfaction, than it is certain that none of the Sons of Adam without the light of the Word and Spirit, can either themselves clearly know, or sufficiently instruct others wherein true Happiness doth consist, much less hold forth the right way how to attain to it. ver. 12. And VII. Because that as what future events may befall him before his Death are hid from himself and others, so there are none that can certainly inform him how these things be so violently hunted after to the losing of his Soul, shall either be employed, or by whom they shall be enjoyed: And so Man's Happiness cannot be in these things, and is folly inordinat.

divinely and excessively to pursue after them. ver. 12. Which Three last Reasons are proposed by way of Question (which have their Answer in their bosome, ob-
vions to Natures Light and common Reason) the more to awaken Men to the con-
sideration of them, and to draw a Testimony against them, if notwithstanding of all
these Reasons they will still seek Happiness in the Creatures.

CH A P. VI.

Ver. 1. *There is an Evil which I have seen under the Sun, and it is common among Men.*

2. *A Man to whom God hath given Riches, Wealth and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his Soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a Stranger eateth it: this is Vanity, and it is an evil Disease.*

Solomon having by many Arguments dissuaded from the inordinate love of things Earthly, and commended the Holy and cheerful use of outward Comforts, in the former Chapter; He doth here proceed in the enlargement of the same purpose.

And for this end he doth First by way of regrave, discover more of the Sin and Misery of the Covetous Wretch, while he saith, *There is an evil which I have seen, &c.* The *Evil* he speaks of is to be taken mainly for the evil of Punishment (expressed in the second Verse) as presupposing the evil of Sin in the Covetous Man. And this *Evil* he describes 1. As very clearly observed by him in his own Experience. And 2. As very Common and frequent Among Men in all places where the Sun rises and sets.

Next, He supposes this Covetous Miser to have his Idol in his Possession, and shews what his Attainments may be. 1. By

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specifying his prime Idols, as *Riches* of all sorts, great *Honour* and Esteem in the World. And 2. By a general Expression *He wants nothing of what his Soul desires*, Not as if the boundless desires of the Covetous could ever be satisfied, but that *He wants nothing* of the things themselves for the Substance of them, wherein he apprehends his Happiness to ly. And these things God is said to *Give* him, not in Love and Approbation of his *Desires*, but in the course of his common Providence, and in his displeasure, as appears by what follows.

Thirdly, He shews wherein God manifests even in time, his just displeasure against such a mans sin of Covetousness in two Branches. *First*, *He Hath not power to Eat* of what he hath. By *Eating* must be understood the Injoyment of the Comfort of his Wealth. 1. Because according to the Grammatical construction of the Words, it relates to his *Honour* as well as his *Riches*. And 2. Because he could not subsist, if all Power to Eat were taken away from him: *Next*, that *A Stranger Eats it*. By the *Stranger* is meant one who is of no near Relation to him, or one who is an *Enemy* to him, as the Word is used, *Hos. 7. 9. Jer. 5. 15, 17*. Both which proofs of Gods displeasure, are not to be understood as if they were let forth upon every Covetous Man; seeing many such *have Power* to take largely of their Riches for their own use, and *leave the rest to their Babes*, *Psal. 17. 14*. But they are to be understood as frequently verified, in so much as many instances may be given thereof.

Fourthly, He doth again pass Censure upon the condition and course of the Covetous, that it is *Vanity*, or wholly *Disappointment* and *Emptiness of Satisfaction*, and an *evil Disease*, that is, a Spiritual *Plague* upon him, spending both his Body and his Spirit.

From this Learn 1. While the Lords Ministers are opening up his sweet and comfortable Allowance to his People, they should not forget to mention the Misery of them that are by their Sins depriving themselves of it, but should with Pity and

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Compassion regrade the same in their Hearing, that thereby such may be moved to resent the wofulness of their own Condition: For this Heavenly Preacher, who is in this a Pattern to all others, having in the close of the former Chapter, commended the Lords comfortable Allowance to his own; he here as it were regrates the Sin and Misery of others, while he saith, *There is an Evil which I have seen under the Sun, &c.*

2. Ministers must not only study to know what things are Sinful, and what Judgements are due to them in the general, that from the word they may clearly discover both; but likewise they ought to be much in the Observation of the particular Sins that reign and prevail most among Men in their time, and of the particular Judgements, whereby God testifies his displeasure against them, that from their own experimental Observation of both, they may discover them to People: For it is mainly of Solomon's own Observation and experimental knowledge of this *Evil*, which comprehends both that particular Sin of Mens seeking things *Earthly* for their Portion; and that particular Judgement of God, whereby he deprives them of comfort of these things, that he here speaks, while he saith, *There is an Evil which I have seen under the Sun.*

3. There are many Sins frequently committed by Men, and many Plagues frequently inflicted by the Lord upon them for these Sins, which sinners themselves do not see nor consider, and therefore Christs Ministers should especially discover these Sins and Judgements, which they do not see, or do not esteem to be such; for Men stand in need of the Spirits Information, that there is such an *Evil* as this *common among Men*, to wit, their excessive love of the World, which is their Sin, and Gods depriving them of the comfort of it even while they have it, which is their Plague: And therefore it is here given them, *There is an Evil which I have seen under the Sun, and it is common among Men.*

4. The Lord may multiply outward Favours of all sorts, upon

upon them whom he Favours not ; he may bring to their hand *All that their Hearts can desire* ; And in so doing , be raining snares upon them. And surely it is so when Men desire these things as their chief good, and when Saving Grace is not given with them, and wisdom to use them aright ; for Solomon speaks here of the *Covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth*, Psal. 103. And yet he is, *A man to whom God hath given Riches, Wealth, Honour, and what his Soul desireth.*

5. When the Lord hath given to Men great Variety of outward Blessings, even answerable to their own desires, he hath it in his own hand, whether he will give or withhold the Comfort and Sweetness of the Injoyment of these things. And this he doth often withhold ; sometimes by leaving them to their own Covetous Disposition ; which binds up their Hands that they cannot use what they have, had they never so much, for fear of want afterward : And sometimes by striking them with his Terroure and Wrath in the midst of their Injoyments, Dan. 5. 4, 5. Psal. 78. 30, 31. So that after the greatest variety of most desirable Blessings is obtained, the *Power to use them* should be sought ; and that being also obtained, should be thankfully acknowledged, as a new and more excellent Mercy than all the rest : For saith Solomon, *There is a man to whom God hath given Riches, Wealth and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing that his Soul desires ; and yet he giveth him not Power to Eat thereof.*

6. The Lord often strikes wicked men forest in these things, and at these Seasons that they least expect. They apprehend all the difficulty in the way to their Happiness to be in the attainings to things Earthly, and yet the disappointment is after all is gotten that *their Soul desired* : For, *there is a man to whom God hath given Riches Wealth and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing of all that his Soul desireth, and yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof.*

7. When Mens Hearts are estranged from God, and wholly taken up with earthly Delights, it is but just with Him to make

make Strangers consume their Idols, which they have set up in His room; So that when Men do immoderately love and seek after these things, they take the nearest course not only to deprive themselves of the Comfort of them, but their Posterity also, whose provision they have preferred to the Favour of God, and the good of their own Souls: For this is another way, whereby God testifies His Displeasure against the Sin of Covetousness, *A Stranger eats it.*

8. It is a vain thing for Men to place Happiness in these things, which when they are given, the Power to use them, or take comfort in them, may be with-held: And it is Wisdom to seek after the true Riches and Honour, Reconciliation with God, His Grace and Favour; which being bestowed, the Power to feel the sweetness of, and take comfort in them, will not be altogether with-held: For so doth Solomon censure Mens seeking Wealth, Riches and Honour, as their Portion, which being had, they may want Power to take Comfort in them. *This is Vanity.*

9. Men in love with the World as their Happiness, are in a dreadful Distemper of Spirit, and should look upon themselves as infected with some loathsome and deadly *Disease*, even such an one as they cannot be sensible of till it be past Remedy, except a Miracle of Grace be wrought upon them: For this is another part of Solomon's Censure of the Covetous Mans case, *It is an evil Disease.*

10. The observation of this *Vanity*, *Disappointment* and *Vexation* incident to *Mammon-worshippers*, should elevate the Hearts of Men above the Sun, and make them long to be where the true Riches and Honour are, and where the Power to take the Comfort thereof is never with-held, nor interrupted in the exercise of it: For *this Evil* is only observed *under the Sun*, that a Man may have *Wealth, Riches and Honour*, and *no power to eat thereof*, and is here held forth to alienate Mens Hearts from this Earth, which is one principal part of the scope of this Book.

Ver.

- Ver. 3. *If a Man beget an hundred Children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his Soul be not filled with Good, and also that he have no Burial, I say that an untimely Burial is better then he.*
4. *For he cometh in with Vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness*
5. *Moreover he hath not seen the Sun, nor known any thing, this hath more rest then the other.*
6. *Yea though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not at all go to one place?*

Solomon doth farther illustrate the Sin and Misery of the Covetous Worldling, whose Portion is in this present Life.

And for this end he *First* supposes such an one to have yet two farther Degrees of his fancied Happiness. The 1. is, A numerous Off-spring to possess what he hath gathered, *If a Man* (saith he) *beget an hundred Children,* he puts a definit number for an indefinite, an Hundred for many, according to an ordinary way of speaking in Scripture, 1 Cor. 14. 13. And by supposing him to be in a case which is not possible, he labours to awake him out of his Dream of finding Happiness in a case far inferiour to that which is supposed. The 2. is a long Life, *If he live* (saith he) *many years, so that the days of his years be many,* by doubling the Expression, he supposes his days and years to be as many as ever any had, or can have: So he supposes him to have these things which he pretends as a Defence of his eager pursuit, and sparing use of things worldly, to wit, many Children to leave these things to, and Old Age to provide for.

Next, He supposes the Covetous Man to want other two things. 1. That *his Soul enjoys no good,* that is, He neither hath the comfortable use of his Riches, nor doth he make sure any

any Spiritual or Eternal Good to himself. And 2. That *he hath no Burial*: He supposes him to want Burial, not as if all Covetous Wretches were deprived of this favour, *Luk. 16. 22.* Nor as if the having of it could in the least contribute to their Happiness; but because Covetous and Ambitious Men do oft make more preparation for a sumptuous *Burial*, than for their Eternal Wel-being, *Isai. 22. 16.* And because none of them can be certain if ever they shall have *Burial*, seeing the Lord sometimes in displeasure deprives the Wicked thereof, *Jer. 22. 19.* Therefore he supposes them to want it.

Thirdly, Upon supposition that he have the former, and want the latter privilege, he doth assert (v. 3) and set forth his Misery, by comparing with, and preferring to his case, the case of an *untimely Birth*, as *Better* in outward Respects specified afterward; for of the future eternal state of the *Abortive* he speaks nothing, though the worst that can be supposed thereof must be more tolerable than the Covetous Mans.

Fourthly, He shews particularly, wherein the Misery of the Covetous is greater then the *Abortives*. As for the Covetous 1. *He comes into the World with Vanity*, that is to no good purpose for himself; or rather he comes in with a load of original Guilt, which is not to be understood, as if there were any who are not born in the same case, but because it is charged upon him now going out of the World, therefore he speaks of it as peculiar to him. Then 2. His Death here called *Departure*, is comfortless and an entrance into utter *Darkness*. And 3. For his Reputation or *Name*, in the perpetuating whereof he placed one part of his Earthly Happiness, that shall not be *Remembered* with God or good Men, for any advantage to him. *ver. 4.* And for the *Abortive*, who hath not had the most common Benefits of this Life, to *see the Sun*, or to have the Exercise of Reason, and so is not guilty of Abusing these and the like Favours, as the Covetous is, *this hath more rest than the Covetous*; Not as if properly such an one could be said to have any

rest in this World, or as if the Covetous could have the least degree of true Rest, as the comparing of them would seem to import, but that this *untimely Birth* is never vexed with such distracting Cares and Fears, as the Covetous Worldling is tormented with.

Fifthly, He enlarges the Supposition of the Covetous mans long Life, by supposing that which is impossible, to wit, that he should have a *Thousand years twice told* superadded to all his other Earthly advantages of *Riches, Honour, numerous Offspring* and the like, and this he doth that he may drive him from the apprehension of Happiness in any thing that he can attain to in this World.

And *Lastly*, he proves by several Reasons that notwithstanding of this long Life, with all the forementioned advantages of it, he is still a miserable man, providing he seek not Happiness of a higher nature than can be had in things Earthly, The *First Reason* is, that he remains all his time a Stranger to the sweetness of fellowship with God; It is safe to understand Solomon so here, while he saith, *he hath seen no good*, seeing he had learned of his Father, that mans true good consists in that Fellowship, *Psal. 4. 6.* The *Second* is, that this man supposed to be so near his imaginary Happiness, must go to the same Place with the *Abortive*, or those he Judges most miserable, he must meet with them in the *Grave* or *State of the Dead*, which is here called that *One Place* whether *All men* go: And so what ever it be belonging to this Life only, that differenceth one man from another, that cannot make him a happy Man, *ver. 6.*

Hence Learn. 1. Men destitute of saving Wisdom are very Ingenious to find out pretences and seeming Excuses for their sinful Courses, and therefore they that would reclaim such, must trace them thorow these, and discover the Vanity of them. For Solomon here supposeth the Covetous Worldling swelling in Riches, to cover his excessive love to the World, and his depriving himself of lawful comforts with the pretence of providing

viding for his numerous Off-spring, and his Old Age, and proves that neither of these doth lessen his Sin or his Misery: For saith he, *Though he have an hundred Children, and live many years, &c.* Yet he is but a miserable Caitif.

2. The Lord may manifest his Bounty to wicked men by heaping upon them the choice of outward Blessings, and may draw out his long suffering patience toward them in great length, by giving them *many Days and Years* while they are walking contrary to him, that by his so doing he may reclaim some of them, and make the rest the more inexcusable: For having before supposed the Covetous man to have abundance of all sorts of Riches, he here supposes him to have many *Children*, and to live *many Years*, so that the days of his Years be many.

3. As those may have variety of outward Blessings who yet Injoy nothing that is truly Good for their Souls, so mans happiness is only to be estimat, according to his Souls injoying of that Good, which is sutable to it, namely, the favour of God, his Grace, and a right to everlasting Blessedness; all other things are but Good to his Body, and in some sort common to man with other Creatures inferior to him; For Solomon supposeth here, that a man may have a *Numerous Off-spring*, and a *long Life*, beside his Riches, and yet be a miserable Man, if so be his Soul injoy no Good.

4. Though Man be bound to esteem it a Blessing of God to have many Children Begotten in lawful Marriage *Ps. 127. 3. 4. 5.* And to have a long Life, when it is spent in Honouring God *Prov. 16. 31.* Yet when he looks upon these, or any thing of that nature as his chief Good, or when his Eagerness in providing for his Children or Old Age, takes him off from providing for his Soul, or proves prejudicial to the true Good thereof; then these outward Blessings are so far from increasing his Happiness, that they do much augment his Sin and Misery, for such an one the Spirit of God doth here set forth as ex-

remely miserable, who *though he have an hundred Children and live neuer so many years, yet his Soul enjoys no Good.*

5. That which is a sanctified Dispensation to the Saints, and is so far from diminishing, that it doth increase their Happiness, the same is a plague and Testimony of Gods displeasure to the Wicked; For although the best of the Saints may be deprived of the Honour of *Burial*, and when it is so for Christs cause, they are so much the more Happy *Pf. 79. 2. Rom. 8. 28.* Yet the want thereof is a curse to the Wicked, and an increase of their Misery, in so far as it speaks the Lords abhorrencey of their Bodies, which they only cared for; for as a part of the Covetous mans Curse, he is here supposed, *to have no Burial.*

6. There may be much Mercy in these Dispensations of the Lord which seem most sad, and portend most wrath to the Sons of Men; An *Untimely Birth* often proves very grievous to the Parents, not only for the disappointment of their Hopes and Desires, but for the hazard of the Mothers Life; Yet it may prove Really (and should be so looked upon) a prevention of much Sin and Misery to the person so taken away, and consequently of greater Grief to the Parents, who should think upon their abortive Seed as in a *Better Condition*, than if the same had been timely, and had come to have great *Riches, Honour, many Children, and long Life*, neglecting with all the study of the Souls true Good; for comparing such a Birth with the Covetous man, he saith, *an untimely Birth is better than he.*

7. Though the natural state of all that enter into the World be equally Sinful and Miserable, as to their Original Guilt, and subjection to wrath therefore; *Psal. 5. 5. Eph. 2. 3.* Yet that Guilt is only reckoned upon the Wicked mans Score who continues in Sin, and is not imputed to the Godly, who is born again, and hath Christs Righteousness imputed to him; For, it is of the Covetous Idolater that this is spoken, as being proper to him to have that Guilt charged upon him, when he is going out of the World, *he comes in with Vanity.*

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8. There is neither comfort, nor hope of comfort in the Death of Wicked men; their Death is their entry into utter *Darkness*, where is weeping, and gnashing of Teeth: For *Darkness* in Scripture signifies both the privation of Comfort, and the inflicting of Torment and Woe; And here the Covetous Idolater is said to *depart in Darkness*.

9. It is just with God to deprive Men of a *Name* after they are gone, who minded never the Glory of his *Name*, nor to have a *Name* and esteem with him in their Life, but placed the Happiness in gaining a high esteem among Men, and in perpetuating their Memory among them after their Death: And ordinarily he doth so; for although some Wicked men may have their Remembrance long continued by some useful Monuments left behind them, yet as to the perpetuating of their *Name* and esteem as truly Happy Men with God; and among them that are truly wise, this is verified of every one of them, *his Name is covered with Darkness*.

10. Every step of a Wicked Mans walk from his entry into the World, to his *Departure* out of it, is in Sin and Misery, so that if such Men could be particularly known to others, this might be truly said of them, and written upon every one of their Graves, *he comes in with Vanity, he departs in Darkness, and his Name is covered with Darkness*.

11. It had been better for Men that they had never been, than to be without God in the World, better *never to have seen the Sun*, than to seek their Portion in things below the Sun: and better never to have known any thing, than to employ all their wit about things Worldly, neglecting the study of Gods favour and Reconciliation with him thorow Christ, for here the *Aborigine who hath not seen the Sun, nor known any thing*, is preferred to the Covetous, as in a Better Condition than he, who hath seen the Sun, lived long, and known much of things Worldly.

12. They that seek Rest and satisfaction to their Spirits in
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any created thing, neglecting to seek the true spiritual Rest which consists in Reconciliation and fellowship with God in Christ Mat. 11. 28. *Psal.* 116. 6. And to make sure their eternal Wel-being, which is the everlasting Rest of the Godly *Isai.* 57. 1. shall be so far from finding Rest in this World, that they shall meet with much unquietness here, and Everlasting Torment hereafter; For *Solomon* comparing the Covetous with the Abortive, he saith *this hath more rest than the other*; and seeing the Abortive hath properly no rest here at all, and yet is said to have more Rest then the Covetous, it is imported that he is so far from Rest, that he is extremely Tormented.

13. All the Favours that wicked Men enjoy, are aggravations of their guilt, and so do increase their Misery; Even this that they have *seen the Sun*, or *have known any thing at all*, makes their case more sad than theirs who have nor: For it is here imported that they are more miserable, than if they had not *seen the Sun*, nor *known any thing*, while the case of the Abortive is preferred to theirs in this, *That such an one hath not seen the Sun*, nor *known any thing*, and *hath more rest than they*.

14. As Men that are Strangers to the Spiritual Life of Grace, and so have no well grounded confidence of the Life of Glory, are excessively desirous of a long Life in this World; so this frame of Spirit is a clear mark of an unmortified worldly person: For while the Spirit of God directs *Solomon* to suppose Men to live so long here, he meets with their apprehensions, that they would be very happy, if they might have the benefit of so long a Life, and therefore do exceedingly desire it, *Yea though he live a thousand years twice told*.

15. The true Good which should draw the desires of Men after it, doth not consist in Riches, Honours, numerous Offspring, or any thing of that sort: A Man may have all these, and yet be a Stranger to that wherein his chief Good consists, namely Fellowship with God, and living in His Fear and Obedience: For *Solomon* here supposes a Man to have, beside the
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former Advantages, *A long Life*, even *a thousand years twice told*, and yet to see no good.

16. Men that have spent *a long Life* in seeking Happiness in the Earth, will notwithstanding of all former disappointments still apprehend they would find it, if they had longer time to seek it; and yet they are but deluded Fools in so thinking: For if they should live *Mesbushalem's days twice told*, and more, they will never see any Good in things worldly, nor can they see Good till they get *Christ's Eye-salve*, *Though he live a thousand years twice told*, yet hath he seen no Good.

17. Though length of days should teach Men Wisdom to prepare for Death and Eternity, yet Men who have it without saving Grace, make a contrary use of it, even to banish the thoughts of Death, in so much, that they who have lived longest, and so are nearest to their Death, are often most forgetful of it, never considering that they are shortly to meet with those who have been early taken away. Therefore doth the Wise Man here put this Question to them, to move them to meditate upon Death, *Do not all go to one place?*

18. The consideration of this, That within a little time we shall all meet in *one Place*, namely the *Grave*, or the *State of the Dead*, should keep Men from magnifying themselves for these temporary things wherein they excel others; and when Men account others for the want of these things miserable in comparison of themselves, they forget the *Meeting Place*, *Death*, which will equal all: For *Solomon* gives this for a Reason why Men should not account themselves happy because of these things, or more happy than others who want them: *Do not all Go to one place?*

Ver. 7. *All the labour of Man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.*

3. *For what hath the Wise more than the Fool? what hath the Poor that knoweth to walk before the Living?*

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Solomon giveth here some farther Reasons of the misery of the Covetous Worldling, notwithstanding of his long Life, and other Advantages formerly supposed. The *Third* in order is, Because the end of all the Undertakings of such a Man, and the effect of all his pains is very bale, it is for his outward Man only, one part whereof *the Month*, is here put for the whole; How can he then be Happy, suppose he have Riches, Honour, Posterity and long Life, seeing he neglects his better part, the Soul. The *Fourth* is, Because all he hath, doth not satisfy his desires; and therefore being still a dissatisfied Man, he must be still in so far a miserable Man, till he take another course for his Happiness. And the *Last* is, Because the Wisest in the World without saving Knowledge, hath no more, have what he will, that brings him any nearer to true Happiness, than the Fool who hath not that Wisdom: But lest the Poor in the World, hearing so much spoken to prove the Misery of the Covetous Rich Worldling, might account themselves happy, especially if they have any measure of Prudence to walk right among Men (for of saving Wisdom he speaks not; but only of that which teaches how to Walk in an approved way before Men Living in this World) Therefore he puts the question concerning these, *What hath the Poor that knoweth how to walk before the Living?* Importing that these also if they be destitute of saving Wisdom, and the Fear of the most High, are not the nearer to true Happiness, that they want the Temptations of Riches, Honour, and the like, which others have, nor yet that they have the advantage of humane Wisdom or Prudence, which many that have Riches, Honour, and other things of that sort, want.

So that the Summ of these Verses, as also of the former, seems to be, *That whatever outward Advantages or Excellencies one Man hath above another, whatever Rank or Degree Men be of, whether they live long or not, whether they be Rich or Poor, Honourable or Despised: Wise or Foolish, and so forth, If they be void of*
save

having Knowledge, they are all alike far distant from true Happiness and Satisfaction.

Hence Learn 1. However some unrenewed Men may seem to have more Pure and Refined Designs than others, 2 *King.* 10. 16. and to be much taken up about things of a higher nature than what relates to their Bodies, *Luk.* 18. 10. *Mat.* 58. 2. yet neither their designs nor pains can reach higher than their outward Man, and Estate in this World; They cannot be for their Souls, or the true Good thereof: For of all such Men, *Solomon* saith, *All the labour of Man is for his Mouth.*

2. They are strangely deluded who think if they had more of things worldly, their desires would be then satisfied: Till the Soul of Man close with, and rest upon that infinit Soul-satisfying Good, God reconciled to them in Christ, give it never so much of other things, the *Appetite* will still cry, *Give, Give,* the consideration whereof should convince Men that they are miserable who seek Satisfaction in these things, wherein it is impossible to find it: For, saith he, *The Appetite is not filled.*

3. Though common Wisdom, or humane Prudence may be instrumental in gaining Men great Riches, Honours, and the like, wherein often, Men who have that Wisdom, excel those who want it; yet he that hath most of that sort of Wisdom, being destitute of that which is from Above, remains as far distant from true Happiness, as he that hath least of it. The consideration whereof should make Men long for that excellent Knowledge. *Phil.* 3. 8. and not account any other Wisdom their chief Good: For it is in reference to the attaining of true Happiness that this Question is put, *What hath the Wise Man, more than the Fool?*

4. As the Lord dispenses common Gifts variously, as well as Spiritual, giving to some a greater measure of humane Wisdom and Prudence, to whom he gives less Riches than to others: So those who have that sort of Wisdom, without worldly

Riches, when they hear much spoken against the Vanity of such Riches, and of the misery of the Covetous, they are ready to pronounce themselves happy; and so to be proud of their poverty. For here is a *poor Man* supposed to have Wisdom to Walk aright before Men; and yet to put him off the opinion of his being happy without the saving Knowledge of God in Christ, this Question is put concerning him, *What hath the Poor that knows how to walk before the Living?* to wit, nothing to make him happy, except he know the way of Reconciliation with God, and how to Walk aright before Him, in the Land of the Living.

5. Though Men be ready to conclude themselves very happy, if they can Walk so before those among whom they live, as nothing can be blamed in their carriage, and so as they may gain their approbation; yet unless they know also how to Walk with and before the Living God, in His Favour, Fear, and Obedience, they are not the nearer to a state of true Happiness: For this Question imports that such Men apprehend themselves very happy, and that is but an apprehension, *What hath the Poor that knows how to walk before the Living?* to wit, Men Living upon the Earth.

Ver. 9. *Better is the sight of the Eyes, than the wandring of the Desire: this is also Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.*

10. *That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is Man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.*

THese words contain several Arguments to dissuade from the immoderat Love, and eager Pursuit of things earthly.

The *First* is, That the contented use of what a Man enjoys, were it never so little, is much better for him, than the *wandering of the Desire*, or (as the Word is) the *Walking* of his Soul still after more, which is the Covetous Man's Disease; So that by *the sight of his Eyes*, is meant, The enjoyment of what

what a Man hath to be seen, or in his possession, as the word is translated before Chap. 3. 13. And it is thus exprest to shew the short continuance of our earthly Injoyments, they are *but a Sight*: And by the *wandering of the Desire* (as is clear by the like Expressions in Scripture, Jer. 2. 20. and 14. 10.) is meant the endless Pursuit of the Affections insatiate with what they have, and greedily hunting after more of things earthly.

The *Second* which proves the former is, that this, namely the *wandering of the Desire*, is a course empty of all Satisfaction, as the Word *Vanity* signifies, and so proves Man vain that should seek Satisfaction in it; and not only so, but in God's Righteous Judgement proves a Tormenting, and eating up of a Man's Spirit, as the word *Vexation* signifies, ver. 9.

The *Third* is, That *whatever hath been* formerly found by any, particularly, whatever the issue and success of their inordinate Desires, and excessive pains for Happiness in the Creatures hath been, *It is named already*, that is, it is clearly exprest in the words immediatly preceeding to be *Vanity*, and *Vexation of Spirit*; And *it is known*, that is, it may be clearly known, and is known to all Spiritual Discerners, *that it is Man*, to whom *Vanity* is to be imputed, *it is Man*, one piece of *Red-Earth* (as his Name signifies) *seeking Happiness in another*, and get what he will, he is a frail dying Man still: And so this that hath been told, hath been the constant course which God hath kept with Man, according to His eternal Purpose (and there cannot be an instance given to the contrary) that whoever sought Happiness in the Creatures, have meet with Vanity and Vexation of Spirit in so doing.

The *Fourth Reason* is, That Man being so frail a Creature *may not Contend*, it is not safe for him; And he doth so if he seek Happiness where God hath declared he shall not find it; he may not be in contradictory terms with Him, as the word *Contend*, signifies, or if he will yet essay it, he shall find the Lord *Mightier than he*, to Oppose, Disappoint and Vex him.

Hence Learn 1. While Men do not fix their Desires upon Him who is the *Desire of Nations*, Hag. 2. 7. Altogether *Desireable*, Cant. 5. 16. And in comparison of whom none in Heaven or Earth is to be desired Ps. 73. 25. Their Souls will still roam and wander, like Sheep that have forgotten their resting place, and go from Mountain to Hill, Jer. 50. 6. For the disposition of the Covetous Worldling is here set forth by *The wandering of the Desire*, or (as the Word may be translated) *The Journey of the Soul*.

2. As men should look upon all their earthly Injoyments as transitory, and things whereof they have but a *View*, as is imported in this, that they are called *The sights of the Eyes*, so ought they to be content with the Portion which God gives them, and to look upon the same as more for their advantage, and serving more for their encouragement in their Masters service, than if it were greater: For (saith Solomon) *Better is the sight of the Eyes than the wandering of the Desire*.

3. The wandering of Man's Desire from one Creature to another for satisfaction, proves all the Creatures to be empty of any thing that can give him true Contentment, and Man himself to be meer Vanity, that should persist in that vain pursuit: For in both these respects, this sentence may be applied to *The wandering of the Desire, this also is Vanity*.

4. If after clear warning, and frequent disappointment of desired Contentment in things earthly, Men will still follow their own vain courses, they shall find the result to be, not only more *Disappointments*, but *Torment and Eating* of their Spirits here, when God awakes their Conscience, and if they Repent not, a Worm that never dies, to eat up their Spirits eternally: For it is the Lord that passes this Sentence, *The wandering of the Desire is both Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*.

5. Both the constant experience of all by-past Ages, and the clear Light of the Word of God, hath proven this Truth, that the pursuit of Happiness in the Earth proves *Vanity and Vexation*.

tion of Spirit to the Pursuer; So that none can give an Instance to the contrary: And this should dissuade Men from that way. For as another consideration for that effect Solomon saith, *That which hath been* (to wit hitherto in all Ages the result of such vain courses) *is named already*, that is, it is called by the Spirit of the Lord, by that name formerly exprest, *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*.

6. Whatever is spoken of the *Vanity* of the Creatures in order to Mans Happiness, is not so much to be attributed to them, seeing they are all good, and sufficient for the ends to which they are appointed, and do groan that they should be subjected by Man to Vanity; As it is to be attributed to vain Man: It is not the Creatures fault that they disappoint Man of satisfaction, seeing they were not appointed to terminat his desires, or to satisfy him, but to lead him to his Creator, nor is it their fault that they prove *Vexation* to him, but his that vexes himself in seeking what they are not able, nor were ever appointed to give: And so all is to be fathered upon vain Man, *It is known to be Man*.

7. While Men seek Happiness in things beside God, they do but *Contend* with Him, or (as the Word signifies) they *enter in Judgement* with Him, as if they would pass sentence contrary to His Decree and revealed Mind in His Word, which is, That Creatures are *empty* of Satisfaction, that Man is vain to seek it in them, and that the Lord Himself is the only satisfying Portion of His People; *Neither may he Contend with Him*.

8. If man considered what his Name signifies, to wit, *Adam a piece of the Earth*, that was taken out of it, and must go to it, and that all his Injoyments cannot change him, but still he must be *Adam, a frail dying piece of red Clay*, it would make him afraid to enter the lists with, or take up a sute of Law (as the word *Contend*, signifies) against his Maker, about the way of attaining to Happiness; For there may be safely conceived a consideration held forth in his Name, to dissuade him from
that

that course, which is a *Contending* with God. *It is known to be Man, neither may he contend with him, &c.*

9. Who ever walk contrary to the Lord shall find him Stronger then they, to blast their Courses, and destroy themselves, except they submit in time, and follow his way: *Quicker may he Contend with Him that is Mightier than he.*

Ver. 11. *Seeing there be many things that increaseth Vanity, what is man the better?*

12. *For who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain Life, which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the Sun?*

IN these words *Solomon* doth *First* resume his former purpose, while he saith, *Seeing there be many things that increaseth Vanity*, the meaning is, seeing there are so many vain Courses, that naturally Men take for attaining to Happiness in the Earth, and so many just Dispensations of God, whereby he disappoints them, as hath been shewn in the former purpose.

And *Next*, He draws several inferences therefrom, which may alienate Mens Hearts from things Earthly; And these he holds forth in three Questions. The *First* is, *What is man the better?* The meaning whereof is, he is not the nearer to his Happiness, for the Question hath the force of a Negation, yea it imports that he is much the worse, and much farther from his Happiness, than if he had never attempted to seek it in these Courses. The *Second* is, *Who knows what is good for Man in this Life?* &c. Which imports not only that Man is uncertain what Condition in the World, whether to be Rich or Poor, to be in Honour or Obscurity, makes most for the satisfaction of the Mind which he aims at; But mainly that there is not one of the Children of Men, till he get *Eye salve* from Christ, that can *Know* or inform another, wherein the true

Good

Good (which is only in Fellowship with God) doth consist; far less how to attain unto it. And to this he subjoins such a Description of Mans Life from the brevity and uncertainty of it, as may teach him not to seek Happiness in things on Earth. The Third is, *Who can tell him what shall be after him?* The meaning whereof is, that not only future Events, which may befall a Man before he depart this Life, are hid from him, or others that might inform him, so that his Happiness cannot be here: But mainly that none can inform a Man how these things upon which he spends his Body, Spirit, and time, shall be employed after him, whether his lawful Heirs or Strangers shall possess them, whether they shall be employed well or not, by either. Which consideration though it be true also in Reference to the Godly, yet it is only a Vexation to them who know not of a better Life, and who place much of their Happiness in perpetuating their own Fame, and securing great things to their Successors.

Hence Learn. 1. As they who have a calling to deliver the Mind of God to his Church, ought to propose some certain scope to themselves, to which they should make all that they deliver subservient, so it is not in vain for them after proof and clearing thereof, to resume and repeat the same, especially when they are therefrom to draw some practical uses, which may be profitable for their Hearers: For, *Solomon* who is a Precedent for our ordinary way of Preaching, having in the entry proposed this for one main part of his Scope in this Book, to prove all created Things, and humane Courses about them vain and insufficient for bringing Man to true Happiness, he doth here, as in several other places of this Book, recapitulate and repeat the same, and draw several Uses from it, Seeing there are so many things that increase Vanity, what is man the better. &c.

2. Till men be set upon the new and living way of true Felicity, which is the study of Reconciliation with God thro' the Blood of Christ *Heb. 10. 19, 20.* their Sin and Misery is

Still upon the growing hand, the more they multiply their Courses for Happiness, the more Sinful and Miserable do they render themselves, if they seek it not where it is to be found, as is imported in this first Question drawn from the former purpose here resumed, *Seeing there are so many things that increase Vanity, what is Man the better?* i.e. he is much the worse.

3. Though fallen Man by all his pains about things Earthly, can come nothing nearer his lost Happiness, but on the contrary is still put to a greater and greater distance from it, yet is he very unwilling to cast up his Account, and consider what Advantage, or loss he hath by his pains, he must be put to this by the word and Messengers of God: For this Question imports that *he is nothing the better*, but much the worse of the many vain Courses he takes for Happiness, and that he cannot condescend upon his Advantage, though he apprehend it to be very great, *Seeing there are so many things that increase Vanity, what is Man the better?*

4. Men without renewing Grace, are not only unable to attain unto any thing that is truly good for them, by all their Pains, but they are also Blind and cannot see that Good, till they get *Eye-Salve* which is vouchsafed but upon a very few: For this Question is put concerning all men in nature, *Who* (of them) *knows what is good for Man in this Life?*

5. The Cause why Men are not the Better of their Pains for Happiness, is their Ignorance of the nature of that true Good which is attainable in this Life, consisting only in Obedience to Gods Commands, and submission to his Correction *Lam. 3. 26. 27.* in Praising of him for his Goodness *Psal. 92. 1.* And so injoying fellowship with him *Psal. 73. 26.* and the like, what wonder then men know not what is their Good in the other Life? For this Question may be looked upon as containing the Reason of that which is imported in the former, that Man is nothing the Better by the vain Courses he takes for Happiness, *For who knows what is good for Man in this Life. &c.*

6 That

6. That only is to be esteemed truly Good for a Man in this Life, which can continue with him, and may be Enjoyed by him all the Days of his Life, whether he be in adversity, or prosperity; And that is only to be in Favour with God, the proofs whereof his Favourites may promise to themselves shall follow them all their days *Psal. 23. 6.* For it is clearly imported here, that if Man know not what is Good for him *All the days of his Life*, he doth not know what is truly Good for him in this Life at all. *Who knows what is Good for a Man in this Life all the days of his Life?*

7. Mans natural Life, and duration here is extremely *Vain*, being so short and uncertain, much like a *Shadow*, that is nothing but *Darkness*, and never continues in one posture, but soon changes and soon evanishes, which ought to be often considered as a mean to draw Mans heart from seeking Happiness here, and move him to provide for a better Life: For, so is his Life and time here set forth, a *Vain Life*, and *Days which he spends as a Shadow*.

8. As Men whose Hearts are wedded to things Earthly, before they seek any other Happiness than what the Earth can afford, they will place it in providing for these they are to leave behind them, or in keeping up their own Memory among Men after themselves are gone; So the Lord hath wisely hid from all of them the knowledge of future Events concerning these things, wherein they might observe his Mercy toward them. For if they should know things to go well after them, and better than in their own time, they would but vex themselves the more, to think that they cannot stay with them, or if they should know them to be worse, they would but vex themselves with thinking upon the condition of those whom they are to leave behind them: Therefore even this should be esteemed a Mercy, and should wean Mans Heart from this World as his Portion, in that he knows not how things shall go after himself is gone. *Who can tell him what shall be after him?*

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9. It

9. It is fit for awakening the Consciences of Men, to pose them with pertinent and rational Questions, including an Answer in their Bosom, which readily Natures light it self, or common Reason will suggest to Mens minds: For so doth Solomon Catechize the vain Worldling, seeking his Happiness in the Earth, by these three Questions, *What is Man the better? Who knows what is good for him? Who can tell him what shall be after him?*

CH A P. VII.

THE ARGUMENT

THE Preacher in the First part of this Chapter, to verse 23. Doth highly commend some things as very fit Remedies against that disquiet of Spirit which is occasioned by the oppression of the wicked; and so proving proper means to bring them nearer to their true Happiness and Contentment of Mind. As I. He commendeth (as the first Remedy against discontent of Mind, which marres true Happiness) That good Name or high esteem with God, and savoury report with Men, founded upon Grace and true Holiness, as better than the most precious things in the World, wherein most men place their Happiness. And The day of the Death, of such as preferable unto the day of their Birth, ver. 1. Upon which occasion he also commends (as a fit preparation for Death) the frequenting those Places, Occasions and Societies where the remembrance of Death is offered, as better than haunting these Houses and Opportunities where Feasting and other Carnal Pleasures abound: And that because Death (which these mournful Places and Companies bringeth to our Mind) putteth an end to this Temporal Life and all its Comforts and Crosses, which will readily occasion the serious Consideration of the living (unless plagued with stupidity) as a fit means of preparing for Death. ver. 2. II. He praiseth that soft and tender frame of heart, which the sanctified consideration of Death begets in the Soul, beyond that Carnal mirth and joy which is ordinarily expressed by Laughter, and other such like Gestures; and this as the second Remedy against disquiet of Mind, the great hindrance of true Happiness ver. 3. And that on the Account 1. That the grave and humble Deportment of the outward Man, flowing from Godly Sorrow with-

in, contributes not a little unto working of their own and others Hearts unto a promising frame for receiving and retaining true Peace and Contentment. ver. 3. And 2. That it is the allowed Disposition of those who are endued with saving Wisdom (whatever be their own particular Case) to have their Thoughts much taken up with such mournful Objects and Occasions; for keeping themselves in a humble and sympathizing frame. And on the contrary the fool, or wicked man; who be not bodily present, yet hath his heart still in the Places and Societies of Carnal joy and Pleasures, whereby he is miserably diverted from the serious consideration of Death and Eternity. ver. 4. III. He commendeth (as a third Remedy against that trouble of Mind which marrs true Happiness) an humble submission unto the serious and wise Rebukes of those who (whether in a publick or private Capacity) have a call from God to represent the evil, danger and remedy of Sin. As better than wicked mens either glorying in their own, or flattering of others in their Sins, ver. 5. And that because whatever joy or pleasure such may have in following of, or flattering themselves, or being applauded by others in their sinful Courses; It is not long-lived, but as a blaze of Thorns, maketh a noise and enderth in smoke: which woful pleasure and flattering themselves or others in sin, he censureth as an empty and vain course. ver. 6. IV. He commendeth (as a fourth Remedy) The grace of Patience under the most grievous pressures and injuries the Saints may meet with, in and from the World, as a great furtherance toward true Happiness, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. In order to which, He 1. holdeth forth a sad effect which Oppression and Violence of times worketh upon the Godly, by reason of their corruption in stirring up their Passions so, and draving them to such Expressions and Courses, as look like fury and madness. ver. 7. 2. He sheweth the root or cause from which this Oppression, especially in judicatories doth flow, viz. From Covetousness and love of Bribes, which blind mens Judgement, and byass their Affections from Justice, ver. 7. 3. He presseth this patient and constant holding on in the ways of God, notwithstanding difficulties and dangers, partly from the consideration of the issue of it, which will be sweet, though the beginning may be bitter. ver. 8. And partly from the desirableness, both before God and men, of a humble and meek Spirit under grievous Suffering, above that proud and lofty disposition of Heart, by which ordinarily Oppressours are lifted up to their own Destruction. ver. 8. And 4. He dissuadeth from two things which are far contrary to this grace of Patience. As First, From the very first and sudden motions of Passion or Revenge against the instruments of Trouble, and Persons of Oppressours, which is the habitual and allowed frame of Heart in those who are void of the saving knowledge of Christ. ver. 9. And Secondly, From that sinful quarrelling at the Lords making Times more troublesome, and Burdens heavier than they have formerly been; since this will but argue ignorance of the true state of Times, foolish presumption in finding fault with his wisdom and unbelief of his Sovereignty. ver. 10. V. Solomon praiseth saving Wisdom (as the fifth chose Remedy against these anxieties of mind that are

so great an hinderance to true Happiness from four excellent Effects or Advantages of it, ver. 11, 12. As 1. That it teacheth men by what tenure to hold, and by what Rule, & on what occasions to improve their Worldly Inheritances. And is that which out of which all outward Enjoyments are but a Snare and a Curse to men, and giveth them fair Opportunities, and putteth them in a good Capacity of doing God Service in the World, ver. 11. 2. That by it Rich Incomes to the Soul from the Lord, which truly deserve the name of profits, do redound to the person indued with this Wisdom, ver. 11. 3. That it is a shelter from many evils and dangers, especially Spiritual, far above Money, which is but a defence against outward dangers; and that in some Cases only, ver. 12. And 4. Least by attributing to Money the like effect of being a defence, with saving Wisdom, he should seem to derogate from this saving Knowledge, he sheweth that it excelleth Money and all other things in this, That it is the means of conveying, increasing and preserving Spiritual Life, and the beginning and pledge of Eternal Life, ver. 12. VI. As a sixth Remedy against that anxiety and trouble of Spirit, arising from the violence of Oppression, the great hinderance of Mans true Happiness; He doth direct to the right Improvement of the Lords Dispensations, ver. 13, to 21. Which he recommends to be done 1. By serious Consideration, and pondering of them, especially since what works God brings about contrary to Mans will and designs of obtaining Happiness in them, cannot by Mans wit and power be altered or winded about to serve his fancied end of reaching a true Felicity in the Creatures, ver. 13. 2. By being suitably affected with the Lords various Dispensations; in Prosperity to rejoice with Thanksgiving, in Adversity to consider seriously the procuring Causes of it; Gods Mind and Ends in it, and our Duty under it: Especially since the Lord had ordered such a mixture and succession of these lots unto Man, That though he had been called to the Council of it, he could not have found out a better and nearer way to advance the Glory of God, and carry on his own Happiness, than these various Dispensations, and his own right Improvement of them, ver. 14. 3. That since in his own short and sinful Life, he had considerable Experience of these changes of Dispensations, as ordinarily are most stumbling, such as just Men falling before the wicked for Righteousness sake, and wicked Men prospering in their sinful courses, ver. 15. He debortheth from two Extremities incident to corrupt Nature, upon occasion of these various ways of God. The One is, That Men would not affect or arrogate to themselves such a superlative Righteousness and Wisdom, as to Censure these Works of God, as not Wise and Equitably carried on, and as if they could manage them to better advantage: And so by this affecting to be more Righteous and Wise than God, bring Destruction upon themselves, both by inward vexation, when things fall out otherways than they imagine they should; And by outward strokes from a provoked God, for such insolent Censuring of his Dispensations, ver. 16. The Other is, That upon the wicked prospering in his Wickedness, they would not discover so much folly and want of saving Knowledge, as to give or sell themselves to such a height of Impiety, as ordinarily upon that occasion unrenewed Men run into. And that because such a

course may hasten their Death sooner, than that time to which in humane probability, by the course of Nature, they might have attained, ver. 17. And 4. since the former Directions for the right use making of the Lords various Dispensations, are the way to Fellowship with God, in which a mans chief Good doth consist; he exhorts that they would readily embrace the Opportunities, and continue in the practice of them: And that the rather, because those who are Principled with the true Fear of God, shall have a sure and sweet outgate (even tho they fall before the Wicked, as to their outward Concerns) from all their Sufferings and Temptations, ver. 18. And upon this Occasion he falls again upon the commendation of Spiritual Wisdom, partly from the Blessed effect thereof, that it satisfies the person against the Trials and Temptations formerly mentioned, beyond any humane help or strength, ver. 19. And partly from the readiness of men (though both imputatively and inherently just) even in their best Actions, to miscarry without this saving Wisdom, ver. 20. And VII. As the last Remedy against that anxiety of Mind, by which true Content and Happiness is Impeded. He recommends that People would not be very curious to hear or know, much less revengefully resent what evil others rashly or passionately speak of them ver. 21. And that because as such curious Inquiries and revengeful Relenements may readily meet with undesired and unexpected Railings and Revilings from their own Domesticks and Relations, ver. 21. So men may be Conscious to themselves that even they themselves have spoken rashly and passionately against others, ver. 22.

The Second part of the Chapter, from ver. 23. to the end, contains imit. 1. A commendation of the former purpose concerning right judging and improving of Gods various Dispensations, as deserving Consideration and Belief, and that on the account. 1. That it was his own Experience after serious Trial and Exercise of Spiritual Wisdom ver. 23. 3. That though he had been very desirous of, and at great pains to get saving Knowledge; yet had he not received that measure of it which was desired or attainable by him, ver. 23. 3. That the Providence of God in governing the World, is so deep a Mystery, that the shallow capacity of the wisest of Men cannot comprehend it: But must look on it as a Pearl lying in the bottom of the Sea, or a precious thing at the outmost end of the Earth, ver. 24. And 4. That it may not be thought that his Ignorance in these deep Mysteries of Providence was affected; He shews what earnest desires and diligent endeavours, he had used not only to attain to the understanding of Gods mind in his Dispensations, And to know not only the natural causes of things, and the Lords holy Ends and Wise Reasons in the operations of his hands, But also to know the madness and folly of these sinful courses, whereby most men think to attain to Happiness, ver. 25. Then II. In this part of the Chapter, having lamented his short sightedness in these Mystrious ways of God, notwithstanding his serious and diligent inquiry into them: He giveth an account of some degrees of success he had of his pains. As 1. That he had sadly found the evil of fulfilling the Lust of the Flesh: Which he manifests, Both by describing a Whoorish Woman, from the Subtile and prevailing ways that she hath in alluring and detaining men Slaves

other Lusts: And by affording some Arguments to deterre the hearts of all from yeelding to that sin of Uncleanness, as being more grievous in its nature and effects then temperat Death, as being a sin which those that are in a singular way favoured of God, and who delight in and study to please him, either do not ordinarily fall in, or being intangled do mercifully recover from; And as being the woeful punishment of other sins, or Mens habituating themselves to and making a Trade of Sin, and so deserving the name of Sinners in a high degree ver. 26. 2. That his calling of being a Preacher both fixing and obliging him to a particular survey and scrusing into the severat cases and conditions of persons that had made Provision for the Flesh to fulfil its Lusts, he had by sad experience found very few examples in the Male sexe (whereof himself was but one) that were mercifully delivered out of that snare; and of the Female sexe, of all these Thousand Whorish Women (1 King. 11. 3.) that had stollen away his heart, or of all these tempting and enticing Women formerly described, he had observed none of them (what ever might be in the knowledge of God or others) to be true penitents and brought out of that Snare of the Devil, ver. 27. 28. And 3 That he had upon farther serious search found, that as God had at first made man after his own Image, indued with knowledge and Original Righteousness and so perfect or straight: So also that all Adam's posterity naturally give themselves now to nothing so much as to use engines and artifices how to commit and palliate Sin, to dishonour God and render themselves Miserable, ver. 29.

C H A P. VII.

Ver. 1. *A good name is better than precious Oyntment: and the day of Death than the Day of ones Birth.*

THE main scope of the Preacher in this Chapter being to discover more of the way to true Happines and Contentment, and to point out some Remedies of these Vexations incident to Men in this Life, That all may be in Love with the Directions he is to give for these Ends, he doth *First* commend a *Good Name*, as that which is only attained by these who walk in the way afterward pointed out.

And

And *Next* he commends the *Death* of such as desirable also. This *Good Name* here commended, is not Credit among the Men of the World, which is founded upon outward Excellencies, Riches, Honour, and the like; the Vanity whereof hath been formerly manifested, and whereof those that are truly Blest are often deprived: But it is an esteem with God, founded upon his free Favour; for so a good Name is explained by another Expression in a place parallel to this in this *Preachers Writings*, *Prov. 21. 1.* Where loving Favour, which signifies the free good Will of God, is put as Exegetick of a good Name: And this carries along with it a deserved esteem in the minds of Spiritual Discerners, founded upon Gods Grace, evidenced in a Holy Life; so that the *Good Name* here commended, is that only which those have who are Christians: indeed, or the Anointed ones of the Lord, who are Perfumed with the Graces of his Spirit, appearing in their Humility, Patience, Heavenly Wisdom, and other Exercises after mentioned: And this he commends as better than the most *Precious* things in the World, wherein worldly Men seek their Happiness, of which one of the sweetest and most useful, is here named for the rest: And so in effect he commends Piety by commending the Sign, or temporary reward of it; and that in these terms which may be most taking with those who are most taken up with things worldly; among which Credit, or a *Name* is one of the chief.

Next, He commends *The day of Death*, namely the Death of such an one as is thus in esteem with God, and deserves esteem among men, as far to be preferred to the *Day of ones Birth*: He mentions not the Reasons of this preference, supposing the Advantages that the Godly have by the one, and the Disadvantages that all have by the other, to be easily condescended upon, some whereof are touched in the Doctrines.

Hence Learn 1. This Heavenly Policy is necessary in a Minister of Christ, who would engage mens Hearts to fall in Love with

with the way to true Happiness, to commend what is to be found in that way, under the Names of these things which Carnal men are most in Love with : And this may be safely done, seeing what ever it be that any are in Love with, the same may be truly found in Fellowship with God. If it be Riches men seek, in him and his Fellowship they may find *Durable Riches* and Righteousness, *Prov. 8. 18.* If Pleasure, they may *Drink of the River of his Pleasures*, *Psal. 36. 8.* And if it be Credit, they may have *A Name better than Ointment* : For so doth Solomon here commend the way of Holiness, by commending the temporary Reward of it, under the name of that which naturally Men most affect, *A good Name is better than, &c.*

2. Although all that take themselves to the way of Holiness, may expect Reproach, and Disgrace for their so doing from the profane World, *1 Pet. 4. 4.* Yet they may be sure of a Name and Esteem with God, and with such as are truly Wise : For Solomon here commends a *Good Name*, as that which all shall have who take them to the way pointed out afterward, *A good Name is better than, &c.*

3. Although the Godly should die to their worldly Credit, and not haunt after vain Glory, *Gal. 5. 26.* Yet such a Name, or Esteem, even among Men, as is obtained by evidencing the Graces of God, *Heb. 11. 2.* By an humble and holy Walking, and such as may keep them in Capacity to do Service to God, and Good to Others, *Prov. 22. 4.* May be desired and sought after, for such a Name is here commended as desirable, *A good Name is better than, &c.*

4. To have such a Name or Esteem with God, and to have his Grace so lively in our Hearts, as we may be refreshful to Others, and fitted for Healing of their Wounds and Distempers, is a Case more to be prized and sought after, than the most Precious things in the World ; such a Name will never rot, though the Savour of it may be held in for a time, it will still break through the thickest cloud of Calumnies and Reproaches

Reproaches: For this comparative way of commending a *good Name* by preferring it to *Precious Oynment*, imports it to have a resemblance thereunto, in respect of the Fragrancy and Medicinal Vertue thereof; and to have something above it, which is mainly the perpetuity of it. *A good Name is better than precious Oynment.*

5. *A good Name*, or esteem among men, is not to be sought so much for what our selves have by it, as because it makes us Savoury and Refreshful to others; and particularly, because it makes us the more fit for healing of their Spiritual Distempers, as is imported in *Solomons* preferring it to *Precious Ointment*, which must be taken in reference to the proportional effects of both; *A good Name is better than precious Ointment.*

6. Only those have a *Good Name* (deservedly so called) who forsake these courses which the men of this World think their Credit to follow, and who take themselves to these Exercises, which others would think a Disgrace: All others are base, and deservedly esteemed so, *Psalm 15: 4*. For having prest the undervaluing of these things which Worldlings do alone magnify, as long Life, Riches and the like: And being to prest these Exercises which they undervalue, he commends here a *good Name*, supposing the same to be only attainable by those who forsake the one, and take them to the other, *A good Name is better than precious Ointment.*

7. It is a greater Sin to blast the Reputation of the Godly, and so by Slanders and Reproaches to incapacitate them to do farther Service to the Lord, or good to others, than to destroy or marre the most precious things they have in the World beside; for, *A good Name is better than precious Ointment*; which is put for their precious things.

8. They have not the exercise of their Senses, to whom the fame of the Godly, the good Report of their Heavenly Graces and Vertues, is not savoury and refreshful: They prove themselves base, who delight not to hear their Graces com-
 Q 9 mended,

intended. Their Vertues praised for the praise of the Giver, and provoking of others to imitation of them. For a good Name, (which may be taken actively, for the Fame, and good Report of the Godly, which comes abroad to others) is better (or more useful for them) in a Spiritual sense, than precious Ointment.

9. The day of the Godlies Death, is in many respects preferable to the day of ones Birth, whether their own or others: For at the day of their Death, their Victory over their Spiritual Enemies is completed, 1 Cor. 15. 55-57. Their Souls made perfect in Holiness, Heb. 12. 23. Their Miseries and Griets are ended, Rev. 21. 4. And their never ending Rest and Blessedness in the immediate injoyment of God is then begun, Isa. 57. 2. While as mens Birth is, their entry into the valley of Tears, Job. 14. 1. the beginning of their Combat with their Spiritual Enemies, and their Peregrination from the Lord, 2 Cor. 5. 6. The consideration whereof should make Death welcome to the Godly when it comes, and may comfort Men against the Death of their Friends, or Children dying in the Lord, For (saith he) The day of Death is better, than the day of ones Birth.

10. That which worldly Men value most, and yet never obtain, that same the Godly finds in a more excellent kind, in the way of Holiness, which the others abhor, and that which is most terrible to the wicked, is made sweet and desirable to the Godly, for a Name is that which Worldlings exceedingly long for, and never get, in the sense wherein it is here commended; And Death is that, which is most terrible to them, and yet the Preacher supposes here that the Godly have the Name better than precious Ointment, and that their Death is sweet and better than the day of his Birth.

VER. 2: It is better to go to the house of Mourning, than to go to the house of Feasting: for that is the end of all men, and the living will say it to his heart.

Solomon having commended Death as preferable to ones Birth, he comes now to direct all, how to make timous preparation for Death. And for this end he commends the frequenting of these occasions, and Societies, where Men are minded of Death, particularly the *House of Mourning*, whereby is meant any place or object that occasions Mourning, especially the house where one is Dying, or hath been lately Dead: And where the Friends, or those of near Relation, are supposed to be left behind sad hearted; And prefers the going thither to the frequenting of solemn Feasts, such as use to be about the times of Birth, or Marriage.

And he proves the preference by two Reasons. The First is, that Death whereof Men may be minded by going to the *House of Mourning*, is the end of all Men, not of Mens Being simply, but of their natural temporal Being: And therefore Men should use all means to prepare for it. The Second is, That the frequenting of such Societies, cannot but in Reason make Living Men, unless they be in a spiritual sense, Dead and senseless, lay to their own Hearts, or take to their serious consideration (as the expression imports) that that will be their own case next, to leave others Mourning behind them.

Hence Learn. 1. Mourning for the Death of Friends is very consistent with true Piety, providing always it be in moderation, mixed with submission to God, and comfort drawn from the Faith of the Resurrection. 1 *Thy* 4. 13. Yea it is a necessary Duty thereby to testify our natural and Christian Affection to our Relations, and sense of our Sin either in Idolizing them, neglecting Duty to them, or not making good use of them while we had them, which calls the best to Mourn, when their Friends are removed by Death. For it is supposed here, that the House where there is any lately Dead, is a *House of Mourning*.

2. Men that are exercised even with outward Crosses, should not be left alone to Mourn, particularly such as are exercised

with the Death of their near Relations or Friends, their Society should be sought after by others, for the comfort of the Mourners, and edification of those who visit them, that they may be minded of their own Death, and of the Death of their Friends, that they may shortly be in the case of Mourners, or may leave others Mourning for them: For it is here supposed also, that it is a Duty to go to the House Mourning.

3. It is not prejudicial to the true Comfort and Joy of a Christian, to be frequently minding Death; nor should he that would have true Chearfulness decline the thoughts thereof, as melancholious and prejudicial to his natural health, as Atheists and Epicures do, 1 Cor. 13. 32. 33. but should use all means to entertain them, as promoting spiritual Joy, when the suitable Comfort against Death is applyed: For Solomon who hath prest frequently the chearful use of allowed Comforts, commends here the use of such means as may keep Men mindful of Death, *It is better to go to the House of mourning.*

4. Though Feasting, which is the liberal and chearful use of variety of the good Creatures of God, for entertaining mutual love among several persons, and provoking one another to rejoyce in God, upon occasion of Benefits received from Him, be of it self, and in the season thereof Lawful, and a spiritual mind may at such an occasion have many profitable and heavenly Considerations suggested to it, provoking it to Admire and Praise the Lord's Bounty and Liberality, Ps. 104. 15. 16. His Providence in bringing such variety of Creatures to mens hand, Ps. 104. 15. to Praise Christ for purchasing liberty to use these Creatures, which sometimes were unlawful to be used, 1 Cor. 10. 27. and especially by occasion of these outward Dainties to be minded of the spiritual Dainties that Faith can feed upon in the mean time, Luk. 14. 15. Yet so prone are the best at such occasions to forget God the Giver, while they are liberally using His Gifts, Deut. 8. 10. 11. to forget the affliction of others that are in misery, Amos 6. 3. & to speak rashly

rashly or indecently of God, or others, Job 1. 5. to contemn threatened judgements, and put the evil day far off, *Isa. 22. 13.* that when it is in a Christians option, *To go to the House of mourning, or to the House of Feasting,* he should prefer the First Voyage to the Last, *It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting.*

5. As there is no Man of whatsoever rank or condition in the World exempted from Death, which will put an end to all his earthly Pleasures and Enjoyments, so the consideration of the certainty hereof, should move Men to frequent these occasions and societies, whereby they may be minded of it, and stirred up to prepare for it: For this is an Argument for going to *the House of Mourning,* rather than to the *House of Feasting:* For this is the end of all Men.

6 No Man that is wise will put off the thoughts of Death, till he be a dying Man, but while he is living and hath Health and Strength, he will lay it to heart and prepare for it: For *Salomon* speaks of minding Death, as a thing so equitable and suitable for Men, that none Living, who hath the use of Reason can neglect it, and as if he were but a dead Man while he lives, who doth not mind Death seriously, and prepare for it.

7. Death is not rightly minded till the thoughts thereof be fastened to a Mans heart, that go whether he will, or be doing what he will, he may never altogether lose (at least) the impression which the sanctified consideration of his Death hath put upon his heart: For so the word signifies, *The Living will lay* (or fasten it) *upon his Heart, or give his Heart up to it.*

Ver. 3. *Sorrow is better than Laughter, for by the sadness of the Countenance, the Heart is made better:*

4. *The Heart of the Wise is in the House of Mourning, but the Heart of Fools is in the House of Mirth.*

Solomon having commended the serious Consideration of Death, he doth now commend that Frame of Spirit, which the

the sanctified consideration thereof works the Hearts of the Godly unto, as a step nearer to that true Joy and Peace, wherein Mans Happiness here doth consist; And this is that sober, composed, and tender temper of Heart, stamped with Godly Grief for Sin, here called *Sorrow*, under which also may be comprehended moderat Grief, even for worldly Crosses, which being sanctified is turned into Godly Sorrow for Sin. This *Sorrow* (saith he) *is better than Laughter*, whereby he means all that Carnal Mirth and Joy which Men use to express by *Laughter*, or such like light carriage, especially at their Merry meetings with others.

And that this Sorrow is to be preferred to Carnal Joy, he proves by Reasons. 1. Because by the sadness of the Countenance (whereby he means the grave, humble, and sober Deportment of the whole outward Man, which is the Result of Godly Sorrow within) the Heart is made better, 2. 2. It is wrought to a more mortified Frame, and prepared for spiritual Peace; and consequently the Hearts of others may also be bettered by it, *ver. 3.* 2. Because it is the disposition of them who are endued with that Saving Wisdom which is from Above, to have their Hearts much taken up with such Objects, and conversant in such places (whether their Bodies be there or not) as serve to increase and cherish an humble and sympathizing Frame of Spirit: And upon the contrary, *the Fool*, or the wicked Man, who hath ordinarily this Name in *Solomon's* writings, even when he is restrained from the occasions or places of Carnal Mirth, *His Heart is still in them.*

Hence Learn 1. When the Lord sanctifies the thoughts of Death to Men, Godly Sorrow will be wrought, or promoted in the Heart, as the Result and effect of these thoughts, they will grieve, not because they must go through Death, but because they have done the Lord so little honour, and are so unable to do him more before they die, and because they find themselves so defective in preparing for Death: For supposing
this

this Frame to be the Result of these Considerations, which may be had in the House of Mourning, and by laying Death to Heart, he here commends it, *Sorrow is better than Laughter.*

2. However, they that are Strangers to Godly Sorrow, esteem the exercise of it comfortless and unprofitable. *Mal. 3. 24.* Yet according to the Truth of God, and the experience of his Saints, it is much to be preferred to the Carnal Mirth of the World, because it makes way for true and solid Consolation, *Isa. 61. 3.* it hath Joy and Peace intermixed with it. *1 Pet. 1. 6.* and always ends in spiritual Joy and Praise, *Psa. 126. 5.* whereas on the contrary, Carnal Mirth hath always, if the Conscience be awake, a mixture of Sorrow, and always ends in heaviness, *Prov. 14. 13.* Therefore, saith Solomon (speaking doubtless his own experience) at the direction of the Spirit of the Lord, *Sorrow is better than Laughter.*

3. The intertaining of a mournful Frame of Spirit for Sin, and sympathizing with others in Affliction, is a special mean of attaining to that Happiness, which is to be had in this Life, and to guard the Heart against these Vexations which eat up the Spirits of Men: So that Strangers to Godly Sorrow, must needs be Strangers to their own Blessedness: For Solomon pointing out some Remedies, of these sinful Distempers which marre Mens Happiness, commends this as one, *Sorrow is better than Laughter.*

4. Godly Sorrow is not a sudden motion, or flash, that evanishes, leaving no effect upon the person that hath it, but is a Frame that abides, and affects the Heart: So that it appears in the outward carriage, and so becomes visible in the effects thereof, which are not a sullen and austere behaviour, or retirement from lawful Society, these being rather the effects of natural Distempers, such as Melancholy, excess of worldly Grief, &c. than of Godly Sorrow, but a sober Grave modest Behaviour, and composing of the outward Man: For Solomon commending Godly Sorrow from the effects thereof, sup-

Supposes that it will compose the outward Man to a modest and sober Deportment, *By the sadness of the Countenance*, &c.

5. That soft walking and humble deportment, which flows from Godly Sorrow, or a tender Frame of Spirit within, hath influence back again upon the Heart, to increas a good Frame and make it better, it being blest with Peace and Comfort, *Isa. 57. 18. 19.* and increase of every Grace, *7 am. 4. 6.* For (saith he) *By the sadness of the Countenance the Heart is made better.*

6. Levity in the outward Carriage, as it flows often from the want of Humility, and the exercise of Godly Sorrow, so it makes the Heart much worse, casting it open to many Temptations, making it more confused, less peaceable and familiar with God, and so more unfit for every Duty: As is imported by the contrary of this, if by the *sadness of the Countenance, the Heart be made better*, than by the Levity or Inconstancy of the Countenance, or outward Behaviour, *the Heart is made worse.*

7. As Saving Wisdom teaches Christians to be Sincere, and not like wicked Hypocrites, *Pf. 55. 21.* and to bring their Hearts with them, when they go to the *House of Mourning*, to signify their sympathy with, and desire to comfort the Mourners there: So when these indued with it, are necessarily detained from the Company of Afflicted Ones, their Hearts will be with them, sympathizing with, and supplicating for them; And this even when the Lord's Dispensations with themselves afford them matter of Rejoicing, see *2 Sam. 11. 11.* For Solomon speaks of this as the ordinary Frame and Temper of the Godly Man, or one indued with the Wisdom that is from Above, whatever his own case be, and whether he be with the Mourners or not, *The Heart of the Wise is in the House of Mourning.*

8. Even when wicked Men may be detained in Gods Providence, by some external Restraint, from their sinful Pleasures and Companions; as when they are by the Hand of God upon their Body or Spirit, put out of a capacity of taking their Carnal mirth, their Hearts are still with their Idol Carnal Pleasure, and

and they are approving of others and counting them Happy who have that Pleasure: For this doth still agree to a wicked Man sold to his Carnal Pleasures, as his ordinary disposition, and that which proves him a Fool, void of Saving Knowledge, even though he were in a Prison, or upon the Bed of Sicknes, *The Heart of Fools is in the House of Mirth.*

Ver. 5. *It is better to hear the Rebuke of the Wise, than for a Man to hear the Song of Fools.*

6. *For as the crackling of thorns under a Pot: so is the laughter of a Fool: This also is Vainity.*

IN the third place *Solomon* commends patient submission to the *Reproofs* of the *Wise*, whether publick Ministers, or privat Christians, who have Wisdom and Calling from God to discover the nature, Hazard, and Remedy of Mens Sinfulness, and this is also to be taken as another mean of bringing Men to their true Happineis and contentment: The *Hearing* of these *Reproofs* he saith, *is better than the hearing of the Song of Fools.* By the *Song of Fools* is meant, not only Ungodly Mens Glorying in their Sinful Courses, but also, and mainly, according to the Scope, their Flatteries and applauding of others in their Sins. Next, He giveth a Reason why the severest *Rebukes* of *Wise* and Serious Men, should be more acceptable than Wicked Mens Flattering Approbations, because all the Joy that Wicked Men have in their way, and consequently in their Flattering, or being Flattered by others, is of very short continuance: And this he Illustrats by the similitude of *Thorns* blazing and making a noise for a little, and soon ending in smoak, upon which he passeth Censure, that for Men to Rejoyce in Sin, to Flatter others therein, or to be taken with the applause or Flattery of others, *This also is Vainity.*

Hence Learn. 1. The best of Men are not above the necessity of *Reproofs*, all being subject to manifold failings *7am.3.2.*

and ready to sleep securely in their Sins, except by some wise Reprover they be alarmed. 2 Sam. 12. 5. For, while he commends unto all submission to Rebukes, he supposes none above the necessity of them, *It is better to hear the Rebuke of the Wise. &c.*

2. Men are so in love with their Idols before they be wakened and reclaimed, that they have within them much opposition to Rebukes, and discoveries of the evil of their Ways, and cannot prize these as sweet and beneficial to them, as they will do after they are wakened: Even what Mens own Consciences will Rebuke them for, they will not willingly admit of Reproofs for it from others, but are in hazard to like better the Flatteries, and Applause of others soothing them in their Sins, than wholesome and sharp Rebukes. Therefore the Spirit of the Lord sees it necessary to commend these as much to be preferred to the sweetest Flatteries, *It is better to hear the Rebuke of the Wise, than the song of Fools.*

3. There is much need of Wisdom in a Reprover (if so be he would expect acceptance and success as a reward) for discerning the Season, the manner of Reproving, and especially the temper of the persons to be Reproved, that he may *change his Voice* (as Paul speaks Gal. 4. 20) or frame his strain accordingly; that he may neither Rebuke without cause, nor so as to irritate the party justly Rebuked, nor for fear of displeasing any, conceal his just Indignation at their Sins. For the Reproof which is here commended to be submitted unto, *is the Rebuke of the Wise.*

4. As Men desire to be truly Happy, and have true peace and contentment of Spirit, they must submit to the sharpest Rebukes of the Wise, and look upon the same, as a mean of promoting their Happiness, the main end of them being to discover to Men, and reclaim them from these Sins which mar their peace and Happiness; For in order to the attaining of true peace and Happiness, is this commended, *It is better to hear the Rebuke of the Wise.*

5. As

5. As it is the mark of one void of the saving knowledge of God (who is the *Fool* indeed) to Glory in his Sin, and especially to delight in Flattering others, and singing them a Sleep in their Sins; so those that are in love with their Lusts, are much ravished and delighted with the Flatteries and Applause of other Sinners: For Mens carnal Mirth, and particularly their Flattering of others in Sin, is here called *The song of Fools*, because it ules to be sweet, both to the Flattering and the Flattered *Fool*.

6. We are not to esteem of the speeches of others, according as they are pleasant unto our corrupt nature, to which nothing is sweet, but what gratifies some Lust, but according as they may be truly profitable, and conducing for our Happiness, though they be never so contrary to our corrupt inclination, and esteem that the best strain for us: *For it is better to bear the Rebuke of the Wise, than the Song of the Fools.*

7. As carnal mirth is of very short continuance, and ends in wo: so it concerns Christs Ministers to study the most effectual way of representing the same to men, and with all how little pleasure a Gracious heart can have in it, as is imported in the similitude *Solomon* makes use of here, *As the creaking of Thorns under a Pot, so is the laughter of Fools.*

8. It is a great Vanity for men to Glory in that which is their Shame, namely their Sin, or to be delighted with that which to soon vanishes, and hath so black an end: For *Solomon* speaking mainly of Sinners delight in Flattering or being Flattered by others, he saith *This is also Vanity.*

Ver. 7. *Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad: and a gift destroyeth the heart.*

8. *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the Patient in Spirit is better than the Proud in Spirit.*

IN the fourth place he commends patience under the many grievous Injuries that the Godly are obnoxious to in the

World, as a remedy of that *Vexation of Spirit* which marrs their true contentment. And for this end he doth *First* shew what effect Oppression hath ordinarily even upon the best of Men, viz. It works so upon their Corruption, that they are often in such Distempers of fretting and Grief, as they seem to be beside themselves.

Next, He discovers the cause of Oppression in Mens corrupt nature, to be Covetousness, they love, and receive *Gifts or Bribes*, whereby it appears that it is Oppression in Judgement, Seats, and Courts of Justice, that he hath mainly an Eye upon: And these Bribes destroy their Hearts, blind their Judgements, and corrupt or sway their Affection from Equity; And this may be looked upon as held forth for a ground of Patience under Oppression, which hath so sinful a Root, And so cannot but be displeasing to God, and consequently punished by him in due time,

Thirdly, He holds forth two comfortable considerations for composing of the Spirits of the Oppressed: And working them to Patience under their Lot. The 1. Is from the Issue of their Oppression, which will be sweet, though the beginning thereof be hard: For this expression, *Better is the End of a thing than the Beginning* &c. Is not to be understood of all things generally, seeing it is clear there are many things whose end is worse than their beginning, as Oppression it self to the Oppressour, Apostasie from the truth 2 *Pet*, 2, 20. And the like: But it is to be restricted to the Trials of the Godly here spoken of. The 2.^d. That *Patience* (or as the word signifies to be long Breathed, and hold on in the way of God notwithstanding of many sufferings) proves one to be in a *Better Condition* i. e. more lovely and acceptable to God, than the *Proud* or lifted up in Spirit, by whom we may understand either the proud Oppressour, or the fretting impatient Oppressed: And this comparison is not to be understood as if *Pride of Spirit* had any good in it, but because the *Proud* are often in a good Condition, in the Worlds esteem.

And

And it is ordinary in Scripture to compare one thing with another in that quality which is only in the subject, in the Opinion of the World; see *Psal. 118. 8.*

Hence Learn. 1. True Wildom cannot teach men to evite Injuries and Oppression in the World; but rather the more men have of it, and the Wiser their Courses be in order to their true Happiness, the greater often are their Oppressions: For *Solomon* supposes here, that the Wise man (who according to the Spirits Language in this Book, is the Godly man or the person that is indued with saving Wisdom) is often under grievous Oppression; while he saith, *Surely Oppression makes a Wise Man Mad.*

2. So imperfect is the Grace of Patience in the Best, And so little do they consider the grounds of Submission and Comfort which might compose their Spirits; that they are ready, thorough Oppression and Injuries from Men to be in such Distempers as if they were beside themselves, by Fretting at such Dispensations *Jer. 15. 10.* or questioning the Lords love because of them *Jude. 6. 13.* venting their carnal passion and tury against Instruments. *Luk. 9. 54.* and wearying of their Life, *Jonah. 4. 3.* And which is worst of all by runing to some sinful Course for their ease. *1 Sam. 21. 13.* For *Solomon* speaks of this effect of Oppression as very ordinary, even in the best; *Surely Oppression makes a Wise man Mad.*

3. They that would discover the Sinful Distempers of People, especially under Affliction, so as they may heal the same, must speak of them with compassion, and as incident to the best of Men, and such as themselves would readily be guilty of, if they were in the case of the Afflicted: Lest people think themselves looked upon as matchless for their miscarriage, or look upon those that discover the Same, as Strangers to the feeling of the power of the Temptations and Trials they are under. For *Solomon* here, being about to heal a fretting passionat Spirit under Oppression, he speaks of it as very incident to all oppressed

prest people, and with pity and regrave, seems to discover this evil, as if he had Experience both of Oppression, and Distemper of Spirit under it in his own person, *Surely Oppression makes a Wise man Mad.*

4. Oppressours have much to give account for to the great Judge of all, they must reckon not only for spoiling Men of their Goods, abusing their persons, and the like, but for oppressing their very Spirits, and spoiling them of their wit and Reason: For *Oppression makes a Wise man Mad.*

5. Though wicked Oppressours pretend Equity and Justice together with the defence of the Common-wealth, and maintenance of their own just greatness, and the grounds of their Oppressing Practices; Yet Covetousness or love of *Gain*, is often the true cause thereof: For it is here imported that their taking of a Gift is the cause of their Oppressing Sentences, and executing of them, while this is subjoined to the former, *a Gift destroys the Heart.*

6. Covetousness Destroys the Heart of them that are under the power of it, it blinds their understanding, that they cannot see the evil of any thing that makes for their gain *Ecc. 23. 8.* sways their heart to receive Bribes, which being received, they think themselves obliged to gratifie the Giver, by perverting of Justice in his favours; So that the Receiver can be no more cordial for Equity, than if he had not an Heart at all, and at last as to the consequence and effects of that Sin, it draws destruction upon the Soul, in all which respects, *a Gift destroys the Heart.*

7. Oppression is often committed in Judgement Seats, and under Colour of Law: And when it is so the Oppression is double, and from two parties at once, from One, who spoils the Oppressed of, or detains from them their own, of whom they do complain, and from the Other, the Judge who takes the Gift, which possibly is a part of the Oppressed's Goods, for this taking of a Gift supposes a party challenged for that which is in substance

stance oppression, and the Judge increasing the Oppression by satisfying the Oppressour for his Gift, *a Gift destroys the Heart.*

8. It serves to quiet the Spirits of the Oppressed to consider that their Oppressions flow from Covetousness, not that the Sin of Oppressours, should be comfort to the Oppressed; But in so far as they by their Sin make themselves detestable to God, and so hasten their own Judgement, and the Oppressed delivery. For this may be looked upon as one consideration serving to compose the Spirits of them who are, in a sort, Mad with Oppression, even this that the cause of it in the Oppressour is *a Gift destroying the Heart.*

9. As the Oppressions and Sufferings of the Godly are but short (for they are spoken of here as if they had but a beginning and an ending.) And the end and outgate is certain and sweet; So the consideration of the certainty and sweetness thereof, may compensate all the present Bitterness of their Oppression, for this is another consideration to quiet their Hearts, *The end is better then the beginning.*

10. A Patient frame of Spirit under Oppression, whereby people submit to the Lords Dispensations, and continue at their Duty in hope of a sweet outgate, is that which God calls his oppressed People to Labour for, as the remedy of these Distempers which are ready to break their Spirits: For Solomon teaches the remedy of these, by commending this frame: *Better is the patient in Spirit, than the Proud in Spirit.*

11. Mens Pride is another cause of their Oppression, a too lofty esteem of themselves, makes them male-content with their measure, which is Covetousness, and that makes them turn Oppressours, therefore he gives the Oppressour the Title of Proud, while he saith, *Better is the patient in Spirit, than the Proud in Spirit.*

12. The Patient Oppressed is in a more desirable, and happy Condition, than the Proud Oppressour, the one hath the Lords

Words favour and approbation, who will plead his cause, and support him under his Burden, and give him a sweet outgate: The other is under his Wrath, and must shortly compare before him, to receive his deserved punishment: For saith Salomon, *The Patient in Spirit, is better than the Proud in Spirit.*

13. As it is the Pride of Mens Hearts, which makes them impatient under Oppression: So the humble and patient Submitter, is in a far more sweet and comfortable condition, even under his Oppression, than the Proud Repiner: For these words may be also taken as comparing the Patient Sufferer with the Proud Repiner, and preferring the condition of the one to the other: *The Patient in Spirit is better than the Proud in Spirit.*

Ver. 9. *Be not Hasty in thy Spirit to be Angry: for Anger resteth in the Bosom of Fools:*

10. *Say not thou what is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.*

HE doth farther press the exercise of the Grace of *Patience* under Oppressions and Injuries from the World; and this he doth in two Dissuasives, whereof each is confirmed by a Reason. The First is, *Be not hasty in thy Spirit to be angry,* whereby he doth not dissuade from that just Indignation which Christians may have against God's dishonour, *Eph. 4. 26.* but from Carnal Passion, or desire of Revenge, even against the persons of proud Oppressors, or Instruments of our troubles, of whom he spake immediately before: And particularly from the sudden motions thereof, whereby the Spirit hastens to Revenge, neglecting these Considerations which might compose it, and incline it rather to Pity than Anger: And giveth a Reason hereof, *Because Anger resteth in the bosome of Fools,* which is not to be understood as if it stayed within, and did not break out, but that whether it kyt or not, it is a settled habit, a frame

frame of Spirit intertain'd without a Battel, in the Hearts of them who are destitute of the Saving Knowledge and Grace of Christ, who are ordinarily in Solomon's Writtings designed by the Name of *Fools*: Those can meet Oppressions and Injuries from Men, no otherwise, than with Fury and Passion.

Next, He dissuades from quarrelling with the Lords dispensation in carving out an hard lot to Men, *Say not what is the cause that the former times were better than these?* which is not to be understood, as if the present times were not often worse than the former in many respects, seeing that is foretold, *Mat. 24. 12. 2 Tim. 3. 1.* or as if the Lords People might not search into the sinful procuring causes upon mens part, of the change of times to the worse, or bewail the defections or miseries thereof, seeing both these are Duties. *Lam. 3. 40 &c.* But that men should not quarrel with God's Providence, for casting their lot in more troublesome times, and under more grievous Oppressions, than have been formerly; as if there were no cause why men should submit to a change of times from better to worse: And the Spirit of the Lord doth not here give particular Reasons of such Changes, because there are many obvious in Scripture, sufficient to give satisfaction herein, only he prohibits and rebukes such Boldness, and gives a general Reason of the dissuasive, that these Inquiries flow from mens Ignorance of the Lords Sovereignty and Willdom, who worketh all for His own Glory, and the good of His People.

Hence Learn 1. Motions of Revenge are ready to arise in the Hearts of the Lords oppress'd People, against the Instruments of their trouble, and will arise if their Hearts be not prepossess'd with Christian patience: For Solomon having commended that Grace, he dissuades from this Evil, as contrary to it, importing proneness in the best thereunto in an oppress'd condition, and that it will arise where Patience is not exercised. *Be not hasty in thy Spirit to be angry.*

2. It is the rashness and haste of Injured Spirits, neglecting to consider the Supreme cause, and Orderer of their Troubles. *2 Sam. 16. 10.* and the Judgement abiding their Persecutors, *Pf. 73. 17. 18.* which sets their Spirits on fire against Instruments: So that whatever provocation the Lords People have from Men, they should not suffer their Passion to prevent their Reason; or to banish these Thoughts which might quiet and compose their Spirits, *Be not hasty in thy Spirit to be angry.*

3. It is not enough to restrain the out-breaking of Passion against Instruments of our trouble, but the very inward motions of the Spirits that way, ought to be suppressed: For if these be not prevented, or timouly quenched, by bringing into the Heart humbling and quieting Considerations, they will soon break out into a Flame, as is imported in this, *Be not hasty in thy Spirit to be angry.*

4. It is the mark of an unrenewed Spirit, void of the Saving Knowledge and Grace of God, to cherish their Passions, to anultiply in their thoughts Aggravations of their Wrongs, and to feed upon the contemplation of possible ways of Revenge, and this without any Reluctance or Grief that the Heart should be so exercised, though a Child of God may be assaulted with Passion and motions of Revenge; yet these get not leave to rest peaceably in his Bosome: For *Anger Rests in the Bosome of Fools*, the Expression signifies to Cherish, Defend and Foster their Passion, *Ruth 4. 16.*

5. Men in whose Heart Revenge is a settled habit, and who do not disquiet themselves by Pains and wrestling with God and their own Hearts, to get another Frame, whatever worldly Wisdom they have, they are in God's account *Fools*, and prove themselves thereby void of Saving Knowledge: For *Anger rests in the bosome of Fools.*

6. When Passion is raised in the Heart of the Best, it is not soon laid again, if it once get admittance, it will readily Rest, and settle at least for a time: For *Solomon* gives it as a Reason

to the Wife or Godly, why they should not be hasty in their Spirit to be angry. because *Anger Rests in the bosome of Fools*: If there were not a possibility and hazard that it might have some Rest and settling in their Heart also, the reasoning were not so cogent.

7. Although it be the duty of the Lord's People to search out the sinful causes, which provoke the Lord to change times to the worse, and the Wise Reasons which He hath for so doing, and to bewail that after-times are far degenerate from the Purity and Holiness of former, as was proven in the Exposition; yet it is a great Sin to quarrel with Providence, or to *Inquire concerning this matter with Fretting and Mal-contentment of Spirit*, as if it were not well ordered by Divine Providence, that we should not have as much Peace and Prosperity, and as great freedom from outward trouble, as those who were before us have had: For this is the Evil here dissuaded from, *Say not thou what is the cause that the former times were better than these.*

8. To Frett and Repine that the present times are worse than the former, argues Men in so far void of Heavenly Wisdom, which teaches those who have it, to adore the Righteousness of God in all His Dispensations, though they see not the particular Reasons of them, *Jer. 12. 1.* and often leads them to satisfying Reasons clearly held forth in Scripture, namely that God in Wisdom takes some times to discover Mens perversity, which at other times, He sees fit to restrain, and to promote by sore Trials the Faith, Patience, and other Graces of His People, which He doth at other times promote without such Trials. *Dan. 12. 10.* So that this quarelling with the Lord argues great presumption in Men, flowing from their Ignorance both of the true estate of the present and former times, which makes them that they do not consider the Good of the present times, which often doth as far exceed that of the former, as the Evils and Troubles of the same do these of

the former: For (saith Solomon) *Thou dost not inquire Wisely* (or as it is in the Original, *by Wisdom*) *concerning this matter:* The Expression intends more then is exprest.

Ver. 11. *Wisdom is good with an Inheritance: and by it there is profits to them that see the Sun.*

12. *For Wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence, but the excellency of Knowledge is, that Wisdom giveth life to them that have it.*

IN the Fifth place Solomon commends Heavenly and Saving Wisdom (for of this he speaks, as is clear by the effects attributed to it, and the Advantages they have who are indued with it) as an excellent Remedy of these sinful Distempers incident to Men, which marr their true Happines.

The Effects or Advantages of it, whence he doth commend it, are Four. The First is, That *it is good with an Inheritance*, which cannot be understood as if this Wisdom were not good without any worldly Inheritance, because Men have been happy with it, who have had no Inheritance of that sort, as *Lazarus*, but the meaning is, That Saving Wisdom is a Good which men should labour for, as that without which the greatest Inheritance is but a Snare, and fewel to mens Lusts. 1 Tim. 6. 9. and as that whereby men who have a worldly Inheritance have fairer opportunity to improve the same, than these who are poor. The Second Advantage is, That by it *there is profit to them that see the Sun*; he doth not here mean the Inheritance, but *Wisdom*, by *It* (saith he) namely *Wisdom*, *there is profit*; importing that whatever true Advantage a Man have, who hath both Wisdom and an Inheritance, the same is to be attributed to Wisdom, rather than to Riches. The Third is, That it proves a Defence or a Shadow, as the Word is, to wit, from many hazards and dangers, especially Spiritual; and this he illustrates by asserting some like Advantage to be had by Riches, *Money* saith

saith he, is a Defence, to wit, from outward hazards in some cases. Or this may be taken for a proof of the first Advantage, that *Wisdom is good with an Inheritance*, because he who hath both, hath a double Defence, *Wisdom* for one, and *Money*, or an *Inheritance* for another. And Fourthly, Lest he might seem to debase this *Wisdom*, while he attributes the like effect to it and to *Money*, he shews wherein it excels. The excellency of Knowledge is, that *Wisdom giveth Life* (by which change of the words it appears that they are used indifferently in Scripture) whereby is meant, that this *Wisdom* is the mean of conveying to Men Spiritual, and of leading them to Eternal Life. And therefore is to be studied by all that would be truly Happy.

Hence Learn 1. Though heavenly *Wisdom* be often bestowed upon those who have little or no *Inheritance* worldly, 1 Cor. 1. 26. yet those who have Saving *Wisdom*, and withal great things in the World, should look upon the concurrence of these two, as a special Blessing of God, putting them in a fair capacity to prove themselves rich in Good Works, for the Glory of God, and the Good of Others. Isa. 40. 9. Prov. 3. 9. and to lay up for themselves good store of Provision for the time to come, in which respects, *Wisdom is good with an Inheritance*, and better than without it.

2. Let Men have never so great an *Inheritance* worldly, they ought not to satisfy themselves therewith, unless they have also *Wisdom*, to use it for the Glory of God, and good of others, Phil. 4. 12. to lay it out when God calls them so to do, Ps. 112. 9. and to keep it when they cannot with a good Conscience part with it. 1 King. 12. 3. For (saith he) *Wisdom is good with an Inheritance*.

3. Whether Men have a small worldly *Inheritance*, or none at all that deserves that Name; yet if they have Saving *Wisdom*, they are truly Gainers and Rich, and though they have never so great an *Inheritance*, any Profit, or Advantage they get deserving to be so called, is to be attributed not to their Inheritance.

heritance, but to the Wisdom which God hath given with it, to use it aright: For by *It* (namely by *Wisdom*) *There is Profit.*

4. Men that have no Wisdom to honour God, to save their own Souls, and to use their outward Mercies aright in order to these ends, though they had the whole Earth left them for an Inheritance, they have no true Profit, their Loss is unspeakable, as is imported by the contrary of this, *By it there is profit to them that see the Sun.*

5. In so far as Men are indued with that Wisdom which is from Above, in so far they are protected from Hazards, not always from outward troubles, but from Wrath, *Prov. 23. 3.* from the evil of Temporal troubles, *Pf. 91. 10.* and from the power of Temptations, *Prov. 2. 11, 12.* For *Wisdom is a Defence.*

6. Though outward Riches be no defence from Wrath, *Prov. 11. 4.* yet from outward Inconveniencies, such as Poverty, and the consequents thereof, they may prove a *Defence*, and should be so acknowledged: For he grants also, That *Money is a Defence.*

7. Saving *Wisdom* gives Life to them that have it, it is sometimes blest to preserve Temporal Life when it is in hazard, as is clear in *Abigail*, *1 Sam. 23. 5.* and in *Paul*, *Act. 23. 6.* 9: it is the Instrument of working and increasing Spiritual Life *Prov. 8. 35.* and it is the beginning, and sure pledge of Eternal Life, *Joh. 17. 3.* How much more eagerly should Men contend for Heavenly *Wisdom*, than for Wealth? and how rich and happy should the Poor of this World esteem themselves, if they have this *Wisdom*? For the excellency of Knowledge is, that *Wisdom* giveth Life to them that have it.

Vcr. 13. Consider the work of God: For who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?

14. In

14. *In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over-against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.*

Here is the Sixth Remedy against that Anxiety and Vexation of Spirit, which ariseth from the Oppressions of the Godly, and marrs their true Contentment for the time: And it is concerning the right use to be made of the Lord's Dispensations, held forth in Two Directions. The First is, That Men would seriously *Consider the work of God.* By the *Work of God* (as is clear by the Instances in the following Words) are meant the Dispensations of His Providence, carving out *Prosperity* or *Adversity* to Men: The reason is, Because Mans Wit, or Power, cannot alter or rectifie what the Wise and Irresistible Providence of God brings about, *Who can make straight* (saith he) *that which is crooked?* which is not to be understood as if there were any crookedness, defect, or want of conformity to the Rule of Equity, in the Lord's Dispensations, or in any Events that fall out, as they are God's *Work*: But the meaning is, That there are many things in His Dispensations cross, and contrary to Man's will, which serve not so directly for furthering his imaginary Happiness in this Earth, as he would; such as the oppressions formerly spoken of, and yet, saith he, *They cannot be made straight*, they cannot by Man's Wit or Power be altered, or be made more subservient to his ends, and therefore they deserve his serious consideration.

The Next Direction is inferred upon this Reason; That Men would study to be suitably affected to the Lord's various Dispensations, which he instances in Two, *Prosperity* and *Adversity*, comprehending all others, and shews the prime exercises which these Dispensations call Men unto. *In Prosperity* (saith he) *be joyful*, he means Spiritual Cheerfulness, and Thankfulness to God, when things go well; And *In Adversity*, he doth not
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press that which is contrary to joy, but that which Men are often then most indisposed for, namely the serious *Consideration* of the Lord's Mind, and what use they ought to make of that case, and the Reason of this is, that God hath so wisely *intertwined these Two*, and made them *to succeed* one to another in the Life of Man; that *he shall not find out* any nearer way to his own Happiness, than by behaving himself suitably to, and making that use of these Dispensations, which God in His Word requires of him, *he shall find nothing*, which if his counsel had been taken, might have been better done; nor can he in reason imagine, that any thing would be more conducive for God's Glory, and Man's Happiness, than the Dispensations of God, as they are ordered by Him; and therefore he should submit unto, and carry himself as God requires, under them.

Hence Learn 1. There is not any *Work* of God's Providence in the World, which doth not deserve Mans most serious thoughts to be taken up with it, every one of them having many of the divine Properties ingraven upon them, *Pf. 111.2,3*, and some language to us concerning the Lord's Mind and our duty, *Mica. 6. 9.* and our blindness being such, that we cannot at the first view take up that which may be seen in any of the *Works* of God, till after pondering every part, and comparing one with another, and all with the Word commenting thereupon, we may see what the Lord intends thereby, and what is our duty in reference thereunto: For this is it *Solomon* here presses. *Consider the Work of God.*

2. They that would *to consider the Works* of Providence, as to work their Hearts to quietness, and guard them against Anxiety and Discontent; must look above Creatures, second Causes and Instruments, and consider all Events as *God's Work*, and all Dispensations though produced by various Instruments, and in different Periods of time, as one whole and intire *Work* in God's Hand, if we look upon *cross* Dispensations as the work of Instruments only, our passion arises against them, and we fret

frict and become discouraged: Therefore *Solomon* giving a Remedy against Vexation, prescribes to Men the serious consideration of the various Dispensations of God in Prosperity and Adversity, instanced afterward as one Work, and the same as the Work of God, *Consider the Work of God.*

3. There is such infinite Wisdom manifested in all the Works of God's Providence, whether of Justice or Mercy, *Pf. 104. 24.* and such irresistible power doth accompany them all, for attaining His Holy Ends in them *Isa. 43. 13.* that it is simply impossible for the wit or power of Creatures, to rectify or change in the least what he doth. If he cross Mens Interprises by Sea or Land, it is a folly for them to think by themselves to repair their loss; If He break the Legs and Arms of States and Commonwealths, and make them halt, all the Earth without Him, cannot make them go *Straight* again; If He leave any to the Crookedness or Perversity of their own Nature (for He may be said to *make Crooked*, as He is said to *Harden* Mens Hearts) neither Angels nor Men can rectify the same. The consideration whereof serves to quiet our Hearts, and make us submissive to His Working: For to these, and many other things of that sort, may this be applied, as a Reason to make Men submissive to His Working, *Who can make Straight that which he hath made crooked?*

4. Though there be no case of a Child of God so sad, wherein he hath not matter of Rejoicing, and ought to make conscience thereof, *Hab. 4. 17. Phil. 4. 4.* yet when the Lord manifests himself in some special way favourable in His Dispensations, giving him the desired success of His lawful Undertakings, and satisfaction to His just Desires, he is then in a special manner called to Spiritual Joy and Praise, and to manifest the same by a cheerful Walking before the Lord: For this is here prest upon the Godly in a prosperous condition, *In the day of Prosperity be joyful.*

5. The main Exercise which God's People are called to under sad Dispensations, is, The serious consideration of Gods

working, that they may know from the Word what may be the sinful procuring causes upon their parts, of such sad things, and so may be humbled for them, *Lev. 3. 40.* what are the good Ends which God aims at in dealing so with them, that they may aim at the same, *Deut. 8. 16.* and what hazard they are in, to put forth their Hands to Iniquity in such a case, that they may Watch and Pray, *Pf. 129. 3. Mat. 16. 41.* For *Salomon* after he hath prest the Consideration of the Work of God in general in the former Verse, doth here particularly apply the Exhortation to Men under sad Dispensations, *In the day of Adversity consider, &c.*

6. Even the best, while they are prosperous, are so little mindful of Adversity, *Pfal. 30. 6.* That readily when it comes, they are so astonished, that they can hardly command any distinct thoughts of their own case, or of Gods Mind in His dealing with them, therefore they have need to be thus put to it, as to a difficult work, *In the day of Adversity consider.*

7. As the Godly may have much matter of Joy (which they think not of) under very sad Dispensations, so they are then prone to run upon the sinful extream of Discouragement, and Despondency of Spirit: For having exhorted them to be joyful in the day of Prosperity, he doth not prest them to Mourn in the contrary case, *But in the day of Adversity consider.*

8. The Lord hath interwoven Prosperity and Adversity along the Lives of his People, and makes the one of these ordinarily Succeed to the other, knowing that they are ready in the day of Prosperity to be lifted up above measure, if some Adversity be not set in the Ballance *Against it, 2 Cor. 12. 7.* And in the day of Adversity no less ready to lose their Hearts if he did not set some Prosperity *against that* *Isai. 57. 16.* For both the mixture of them, and the succession of one of them to the other is imported in this: *He hath set the one against the other.*

9. This mixture, and succession of Crosses and Comforts, Adversity and Prosperity in the life of Man, is so wisely ordered, that

that no man can find out any thing wanting in the contrivance of these, which might more conduce for Gods Glory, and his Peoples Happiness; so that if any man think it had been better that *Prosperity* had come sooner, or continued longer, or that *Adversity* had either not come at all, or come later, or continued shorter, he proves himself a Fool in making himself Wiser than God: For he hath wisely ordered his Dispensations to the end, *that man should find nothing after him.*

Ver. 15. *All things have I seen in the days of my Vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.*

16. *Be not righteous over much, neither make thy self over wise: why shouldst thou destroy thy self.*

17. *Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?*

Solomon proceeds to guard against stumbling at sad Dispensations, and to direct to a right frame of spirit, and carriage under them: And in order hereunto, he doth *First*, hold forth his own experience of what he is to deliver, while he saith *All things have I seen in the days of my Vanity.* By *All things* he means *All Kinds* of Dispensations of Providence, especially such as are most vexing to men, and by *the days of his Vanity*, he means his by-past short and sinful Life.

Next, He giveth two instances of these Dispensations which he had observed, and which Men are most apt to stumble at. The one is, of a *Just Man perishing in his Righteousness*, which is not to be understood as if any justified by Faith in Christ, and walking Holily (who is the Righteous One here spoken of) could totally and finally Perish or be Lost, but the meaning is, that such an One may suffer the loss of his natural Life, and outward Estate, and fall under common Calamities, and

that For his Righteousness, as the particle *IN* is sometimes used to signify in Scripture *Masb. 6. 7.* The other instance is of a *Wicked Man* spared and enjoying a long Life in *Wickedness*, ver. 15.

Thirdly. he dissuades from some of these Evils which readily stir in corrupt nature, upon the observation of these Dispensations, and they are of two sorts. 1. Either Men censure these Dispensations of the Lord in suffering the *Righteous to Perish*, and the *days of the Wicked to be prolonged*, as if this Government of things were not Righteously and Wisely carried, and as if themselves would deal more equitably and Wisely, by giving temporal reward and punishment, to the Godly and Wicked according to their way: Now this is to be *Righteous over much*, and to be *Over-wise*. And so these expressions are not to be understood, as if there could be any excess of true Righteousness, or saving Wisdom, but that there is a supposed and affected Righteousness and Wisdom that Men arrogate to themselves, while they censure Divine Dispensations, and imagine they would dispose more Wisely of things: And this he dissuades from by an Argument taken from the hazard of it, *why shouldst thou destroy thy self*, both by inward Vexation that things should go so contrary to what thou thinkest would be right and wisely done, and so also by provoking God to inflict destroying strokes ver. 16. Or 2. If Men run not upon this sinful extream, then readily upon the sight of the Wicked's Prospering, and prolonging his Life in his Wickedness, they loose the Reines to all sort of iniquity; and from this he dissuades, while he saith, *Be not over much wicked, neither be thou Foolish*, which cannot be understood as if any degree of wickedness were approven or tolerat by him, who perfectly hates all Iniquity, *Hab. 2. 13.* But the meaning is, that they should beware to give themselves up to that height of Wickedness (and so to manifest themselves destitute of Saving Knowledge) which readily unrenewed Men run unto, upon the sight of Wicked Mens prospering in sin for a time: And this also he presses by

a Reason much of the same force with the former, *why shouldst thou Die before thy time?* Not as if the Death of any could prevent the time which God hath appointed, but the meaning is, that Men by their carriage do what in them lyes to shorten their Days, and hasten their own Death by their Sinful Courses, *before the time*, to which according to the ordinary course of nature, they might have come.

From this Purpose Learn 1. That which doth much marvellous submission to the Lord's Dispensations is, that Men look upon them as strange and not usual, as if those who lived before had not seen the like: For as a Remedy of want of submission to the Lord's Dispensations, *Solomon* here holds forth his own experimental Observation of the like, *All things have I seen*, &c.

2. Whensoever Men reflect aright upon their by past time, how prosperous or peaceable soever it hath been, they will see it *Vain*, not only for the shortness of it, which is best seen when it is past, and for the mixture of Crosses that hath been with it, but mainly for that sinfulness which hath accompanied them in their best times: For so doth *Solomon* here describe his by-past time. *The days of my Vanity.*

3. Though all that are justified by the imputation of Christ's Righteousness, and are truly Holy, be beyond the hazard of eternal perishing, *Rom. 8. 1.* yet such is the malice of the wicked World against these whose carriage is a tacite Reproof and Shame to theirs, that they are often cut off in the way of Well-doing, and so perish in regard of their natural Life and worldly Interests, which is a merciful Dispensation to them, hastening them to their eternal Rest and Felicity, *Isa. 57. 2.* For, (saith *Solomon*) *There is a just Man that perishes in his Righteousness.*

4. Though the Lord be Angry with the Wicked every day *Pf. 7. 11.* and testifies the same against some of them, by cutting them off in the Morning of their Life, *Pf. 55. 23.* yet He lets it fit sometimes to exercise His long suffering Patience toward

ward them, and to spare them long in their sinful Courses, that at last the equity of His severity against them, may be the more conspicuous. *Rom. 2. 5, For (saith he) there is a wicked Man that prolongs his life in his wickedness.*

5. Though the best of Men come far short of conformity to the Rule of Righteousness and Holiness, and of that measure of heavenly Wisdom which is attainable, *1 Cor. 13. 9. Phil. 3. 12*: yet there is so much Pride and Arrogancy in Men, that they fancy themselves to have, or presume to attain unto, a more exact Righteousness, and higher degree of Wisdom, than God doth require or approve, while they affect a Righteousness of their own, before they come to Christ to get it, *Jab. 13. 8.* while they think to please God with more severe Exercises of Religion, or with greater Pains or Cost in His Worship, than He requires, *Mica. 6. 6, 7. 1 Tim. 4. 3.* and especially, which is mainly intended here. while they censure the Lord's Dispensations in suffering the Just to perish in his Righteousness; as if they would have a more exact Righteousness in the administration of Affairs in the World; and think it were greater wisdom to cut off the Wicked, than to suffer them to prolong their days in wickedness: For this is here dissuaded from, *Be not Righteous over much, neither make thy self over Wise.*

6. This bold presumption of Men in magnifying their own worth and wisdom, as if they could guide the World more equitably and wisely than God doth, deserves to be suppressed with Holy Scorn and Indignation: For we may look upon this as an Holy Irony, *Be not Righteous over much, neither make thy self over Wise.*

7. To censure the Lords Dispensations, as if there ought to be more Equity and Wisdom manifested in them, is the nearest way for Men to draw destruction upon themselves, not only in so far as by their anxiety, and fretting against what cannot be changed, they spend their own Spirits, but mainly, because it is a Sin crying for Destruction from the Almighty, and will draw

draw it out of His Hand, if it be continued in, as is imported in this Reason, *Why shouldst thou destroy thy self?*

8. It is Mens conceit of their own Wisdom, which is nothing else but the height of folly, that makes them miss any degree of Righteousness, and Equity in the Lords proceedings: For this last Branch of the Dissuasive may be looked upon as the cause of the former, *Be not Righteous over much*, by prescribing a more equitable way than God keeps in His dealing, *Neither be thou over Wise*, namely in thine own eyes, which occasions the former.

9. From the sight of Piety oppressed, and Wickedness spared in prospering, there doth arise in Mens corrupt Nature a powerful temptation to loose the Reines to all Impiety, when Men see Wickedness rewarded, and them that tempt God delivered, they are ready to run with such to the same excess of Riot, and do Evil with both hands earnestly, which is the thing here dissuaded from, *Be not over much wicked*.

10. To take liberty and encouragement to commit Iniquity with greediness, from the impunity of others committing the like, is great Folly, and an evidence of the want of the saving Knowledge of God: And this Ignorance or Folly is also the cause of their giving up themselves to that course: For this second Clause may be looked upon both as the evidence, and cause of the former, *Neither be thou foolish*.

11. Though there be an appointed time to Man upon Earth, *Job 7. 1.* and all that he can do, can neither hasten his Death before that time, nor prolong his Life after it; yet Men by giving up themselves with full purpose of Heart to commit wickedness, they take the neereast course to shorten their own days, although they think thereby to prolong their Life, because they see it fall out so with some Sinners, and they shall meet with this Judgement, that Death shall come before they be ready for it; And often they hast themselves away by spending themselves in the satisfaction of their Lusts, before the time to
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which, according to humane appearance, and the ordinary course of Providence, they might have lived: So that such may be looked upon as Self-murderers, as is imported in this, as also in the former Reason, *Why shouldst thou die before thy time?*

Ver. 18. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this: yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand, for he that feareth God, shall come forth of them all.*

HERE Solomon presses a right use making of his former Doctrine, especially concerning a right carriage under an hard lot in the World, neither censuring the Lord's Righteousness or Wisdom, in suffering the Godly to be oppressed, nor taking evil Courses because of the prosperity of the Wicked.

And this he doth *First*, By commending the Course formerly prescribed, *as Good*, that is, the way to sweet communion with the Lord, wherein Mans chief Good consists.

Secondly, By pointing out wherein the right use making of the former Doctrine doth consist: To wit, 1. That Men *should take hold of it*, whereby is meant the hearty imbracing of it, as it was branched out in several Directions, as the like Expression applied expressly to the Doctrine *Prov. 4. 13.* makes clear. 2. That they *should not withdraw their hand from it*, that is, never intermit their Duty for any suffering can befall them for following of it.

Thirdly, By holding forth a sweet Promise to the Man indued with the *Fear of the Lord*, which is the right principle of the Obedience which he presses, *That he shall come out of them all*, to wit, all his Sufferings in the way of his Duty, even these formerly mentioned, wherein he may perish as to his outward Being and Concernments in the World, and out of all these Temptations or sinful Extreames, from which he formerly dissuaded, and to which Men void of the Fear of the Lord are driven by Suffering.

Doct.

Doct. 1. The Ministers of Christ may learn from Solomon²³ practice here, not to satisfy themselves with the simple pressing upon people their Duty, and dissuading of them from these Evils which they are in hazard to be carried away with, but to dwell upon the commending of the Truth, clearing the nature of peoples obedience to it, pressing the same upon them, and holding out encouragements to them in so doing: For so doth this heavenly Preacher commend his former Doctrine, clear and press obedience to it, and encourage them who receive and obey it. *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this, also from this withdraw not thy hand, for he that Fears God shall come out of them all.*

2. They that would rightly receive, and profit by the Truth of God, must take fast hold of it, by bending their Witt to comprehend the sense of it clearly, *Prov. 2. 2, 3.* fixing their minds upon it by meditation, and pondering of it, *Luk 2. 19.* embracing it by Faith, and spending their affections upon it. *Heb. 11. 13.* So laying (as it were) Deaths grips upon it, resolving never to part with it, as Men do with things that concern their Life, *Prov. 4. 13.* and taking it to them, as their Possession and Inheritance, as David expresses his taking hold of the Word, *Pf. 119. 111.* where this same word which is here translated to take hold, is used: For in order to the right receiving of the former Directions, so as they may be truly profitable, he saith, *It is good that thou shouldst take hold of it.*

3. They that would rightly receive the Truth of God, so as they may find true Comfort and Profit by it, must put their Hand to the Duties which it presses, and follow them closely, notwithstanding any temporal inconvenience that may follow thereupon, which is perseverance in Wel-doing: For this Solomon presses upon them that have heartily received the Truth, *Also from this withdraw not thine hand.*

4. They that would so make use of the Truth, as to be led by it to their Happiness, they must not separat the Directions

thereof, but must *take hold* of them all, and *not withdraw* *their hand* from the practice of any commanded Duty: For while he presses obedience to his former Doctrine, which doth contain several Directions and Dissuatives, he commends the receiving and practice of all as one, because they must not be separat, *It is good that thou take hold of this, yea, from this withdraw not thine hand.*

5. True Comfort and real Advantage is to be had by the hearty imbracing of the Truth, and walking in the practice of it, notwithstanding of Sufferings for so doing, and there is neither Comfort nor Profit in any way else. For so he commends it here from the sweetness and advantage of it, as the signification of this Word bears, *It is good that thou take hold.*

6. They that by Faith *take hold* of the Directions of the Word, and are not by Sufferings driven from the obedience thereof, they give evidence that they have in their Hearts the true *Fear of the Lord*, as the principle of their obedience: For having exhorted to the believing and obeying of the former Directions, and holding out a Promise to them that so make use of the Truth for their encouragement, instead of describing the Man to whom the Promise belongs from his obedience, he designs him by that which is the principle of his obedience, and is evidenced by it, *He that Fears the Lord shall come out, &c.*

7. Whatever hazards Men incur for fear of displeasing God, and whatever temptations they be assaulted with, and do oppose, lest by yielding to them they offend him, they shall be sure to come out of them all: For both of the Sufferings and Temptations formerly mentioned, Solomon here speaks, while he saith, *He that Fears God shall come out of them all.*

Ver. 19. *Wisdom strengtheneth the Wise, more than ten mighty Men which are in the City.*

20. *For there is not a just Man upon earth, that dash gold, and sinneeth not.*

HE returns again to the commendation of Heavenly Wisdom from the blessed Effects thereof, that it *Strengthens* and fortifies the person indued therewith against yeilding to the Temptations, or succumbing under the Trials formerly mentioned, and this effect he illustrates by preferring the strength which this *wisdom* giveth, to *the Strength of ten Men for defending of a City*, or never so many Men, for *Ten* is frequently in Scripture put for *very many* Gen. 31. 7. Job. 19. 3. though they be all *Rulers*, as the word *Mighty* signifies.

Next, he brings an Argument to prove the excellency of this *wisdom*, above all humane strength without it, and to excite Men to the study of it, taken from the proneness of the best to miscarry, even in their best Actions: For saith he, *there is not a just Man*, to wit, inherently and compleatly Righteous upon the Earth, or, there is not a justified person who is by imputation Just, *Who doeth good*, and (even in doing of it) *Sinneth not*: And therefore there is much need of this Heavenly Wisdom, which discovers the way how Ungodly Men, may have their by past Sinfulness covered, Rom. 3. 25. And may be reputed Just in Gods sight *Isai. 53. 11*. And for the future may be kepted from these sinful extreames formerly mentioned.

Hence Learn, 1. The certainty of a delivery out of Temptations and Troubles, should nor make the Lords people careless, or shake their diligence in the study of Heavenly Wisdom, which discovers the way of opposing Temptations, and the right use of lawful means of Defence against outward hazards: For, having promised that they shall come forth of all these, he now commends *Wisdom* which *Strengthens* against all these, *Wisdom Strengthens the wise, more than ten mighty men*.

2. No mans Wisdom can sat him beyond the reach of assaults from spiritual or outward Enemies, while he is in this Life, the truly wise have more Enemies to oppose, than any City in the World hath, as is supposed in this, that *Wisdom Strengthens the Wise more than Ten mighty Men which are in the City*.

3. Spiritual and Heavenly Wisdom, brings much spiritual Strength to the Soul indued with it, for opposing Temptations and enduring difficulties with Patience, and Cheerfulness; it sets the Soul either upon the use of some approved means for preventing outward hazards, *1 Sam. 20. 16. 22.* Or upon the right way of bearing them Patiently, and Cheerfully *Philip. 4. 12.* And leads it to Christ who is the Believers Strength for all that he hath to do, *Isai. 45. 24.* For Solomon here commends it from the effect of it, *Wisdom Strengthens the Wise more than Ten mighty Men.*

4. However the Men of this World confide much in their numbers of Men, especially in their Rulers and great Persons, yet without saving Wisdom to depend upon God in straits, these will prove weak, and more unable to defend them, than such are who want all external means of defence, and have that Wisdom: For, saith he, *Wisdom Strengthens more than Ten mighty Men that are in the City.*

5. It is impossible for any mortal to attain to a perfect and personal Righteousness; All having in Adam lost strength for what is good *Rom. 3. 15.* For this may be looked upon as describing negatively the case of every Man considered in himself *There is not a just Man upon Earth. &c.*

6. Even they that are reputed just by the imputation of Christs Righteousness to them, are but in part sanctified in this Life, there remains still in them a great byas toward that which is sinful, and the same is still manifesting it self in them, and will be so as long as they are on Earth: For of a justified person by Faith in the Righteousness of the Messiah may this be taken, as pointing at the imperfection of his inherent Righteousness, or Sanctification. *There is not a just Man upon Earth, that doth Good and sinneth not.*

7. The proneness that is in justified persons to miscarry, and sin against God, even in doing that which is good, should incite them to the study of Heavenly Wisdom which discovers
Tempta-

Temptations, directs them how to get Strength for opposing them, and to apply a remedy when they are in part overtaken by them: For he brings this as a Reason, or motive to the study of this Wisdom, that *There is not a just Man upon the Earth that doth Good, and Sinneth not.*

8. There is not only Sin in justified persons, when they do that which is in it self Sinful, or omit what is their Duty, but even in the best of their Actions, in so far as they are always short of the right manner of going about their Duty: For saith he, *There is not a just Man upon the Earth that doth Good, and (even in doing Good) Sinneth not.*

Vcr. 21. *Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou bear thy servant curse thee.*

22. *For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth, that thou thy self likewise hast cursed others.*

HE gives here a seventh Direction as a remedy of that Vexation which is incident to Men in this Life, and the way to evidence that Heavenly Wisdom which he commended in the former words, to wit, that *Men should not take heed to all Words that are spoken*, he means Words spoken against themselves, and this rashly, and in passion, as is clear from what follows. And by taking heed to them (which he prohibits) is meant, their *Resenting* of them deeply, or as the Word is in the Original, the *giving of their Heart* to them, or suffering them to *Settle* in their minds, so as to study revenge: And this he presseth by two Reasons. 1. If Men be very *Curious* to hear such things, and take them much to Heart, they may very readily meet with matter of Vexation from those within their doors, and of neer Relation to them: As for example, *they may hear their own Servants* speak rashly, and contemptibly of them, or *Rail* upon them, as the Word here translated to *Curse* signifies. The 2. Reason is, that Mens own Consciences may tell them, that frequently,

frequently they have had such passions, and uttered such expressions *against others*, and therefore seing every one should give to others the measure they would have from them, every reviling speech should not be deeply resented.

Hence Learn. 1. Though the Lord's people may so far resent Slanders, or reviling speeches, which probably have weight and Credit with others to blemish their Reputation, and incapacitat them for doing Service to God, as that they may vindicat themselves, and clear their own Innocency *Job. 27. 5. 6.* Yet as they desire to intertain true Peace, and manifest themselves guided by the Wisdom that is from above, they should shew themselves so much comforted in Gods Approbation, *1 Cor. 3. 3. 4.* So afraid lest their own inclinations to revenge, or grief prevail, *Pf. 39. 1.* And so charitable of others, judging, that they will readily check themselves for what hath rashly escaped them to their prejudice, that they should not be very *Curious* to hear or know that others speak evil of them, or having heard it, they should sometimes forget, or not regard it, so that those who do curiously inquire concerning others Opinion of them, or deeply resent every thing that crosses their proud desires of Applause, they prove themselves Fools, and Enemies to their own peace: For as an evidence of Heavenly Wisdom, and a remedy of Vexation, he gives this direction, *Also take nos heed to all words that are spoken,*

2. They that have others under them as their Servants, should be so apprehensive of Temptations arising from their low Condition, and so sensible of what themselves would be prone to, if they were in their case, that though they may suppose them to repine, and sometimes to be malicious and bitter even against themselves, yet should they not be very inquisitive to know or hear them express the same, nor having heard it, should they resent every thing of that sort, considering that they will readily but augment their own trouble by their so doing: For *Solomon* brings this as a Reason why *Men should nos take*

Take heed to all words that are spoken, lest (saith he) thou hear thy Servants Curse thee.

3. As it is too ordinary with *Servants* by Reason of their Pride, love to their ease, and discontentment with their Lot, to express their bad esteem of their Masters, to revile, and wish evil to them whom they are bound to respect, though they be Wicked 1 *Pet.* 2. 18. So it doth often prove matter of Vexation to Masters to hear or know themselves so used by their Servants, whose Relation calls them to maintain their Credit, and the Lord doth often correct the Pride of Masters, their severe Domineering over their Servants, and craving more respect than is due to them, by making them meet with the contrary, for so much is imported in this Reason, why Masters should not be curiously inquisitive what their Servants say of them, nor much resent every thing they hear them speak against them, *lest thou hear thy Servant Curse thee.*

4. As Men own by past Faults should never be forgotten by them, so the sensible remembrance of them should make them sparing to deal Rigorously with others, and particularly when they understand themselves to be ill spoken of, or Reproached by others, they should then call to mind, whether they have not been guilty of the like wrong to others, that so they may Reverence Gods Justice, and give the like Pity and Charity to others which they stood once in need of from others: For this is a Reason why Men should not watch for Advantage of others, nor resent Reproaches from them, *oftentimes also thine own heart knows that thou thyself hast Cursed others.*

5. When Mens miscarriage toward others hath not humbled them, but they continue lofty, seeking occasions to shame or Censure others for the same faults whereof themselves are guilty, it is just with God to make them meet with that measure which they have given to others: For it is here implied that Men of that temper will get such a meeting, *Take not heed to all words lest thou hear thy Servants curse thee, for thou thyself knowest that thou hast Cursed others.*

6. There

6. There is a Conscience within every Man, that Registers his Faults, and would minde him of them, if he would put it to speak, unless he have blotted that Book by habitual Sinning, and thereby also have provoked God *so far as with an host Iron*: For this Reason imports, that every Mans Heart may know his by-past Iniquities, *I by heart knows that thou hast Cursed others,*

Ver. 23. *All this have I proved by Wisdom: I said I will be wise but it was far from me.*

24. *That which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out?*

25. *I applyed mine heart to know and to search, and to seek out Wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madnes,*

HE commends his former Doctrine, and proves it worthy of all acception by several Arguments. The *First* is, that all along he had Preached his own Experience, he had taken trial by the Help of that eminent degree of *Wisdom* wherewith God had indued him, and had found that the Lords Dispensations ought to be judged of as hath been formerly exprest.

The *Second* is, that he had with full purpose of Heart given up himself to acquire that Experimental Knowledge which here he Communicats to Others, he said, *He would be Wise*. And withall he humbly regrets his small success, *that Wisdom was far from him*, not as if his pains had not been at all successful, but the meaning is, that he was far from that measure which he desired, and was attainable ver. 23. And of this he giveth two Reasons. 1. That Gods providence in Governing the World, is a subject very far remote from common Capacities, and in itself Mysterious and profound; And this he lets forth by two Similitudes; the one is of things *Far* distant from us, as it were at the remotest Corners of the Earth, which

we can not see, nor without difficulty hear or know any thing of: The other is of things *Deep*, down in the bottom of the Sea (as it were) or at the center of the Earth, for the word *Deep* is doubled in the Original, and is well Translated *exceeding Deep* ver. 24. And that it may not be thought his Laziness was the cause of his short Sightedness, he shews that his heart was wholly bent upon that study, and that he did multiply his indeavours in the use of all lawful means, as the different expressions here of *Applying his Heart, Searching, and Seeking out* import, as they do elsewhere in Scripture *Deut. 13. 14.*

And *Lastly*, He shews what it was that he did particularly aim at in his Study. 1. To *Know Wisdom*, which is nothing else, according to the scope, but to understand the Mind of God in his Dispensations, so far as the same may be known by the light of the Word and Spirit of God: *Hos. 14. 9.* And 2. To *know the reason of things*, whereby is meant not so much the knowledge of the natural Causes of things, as of the Blessed Ends and Holy Reasons, which God hath in His Operations. And 3. To *know the wickedness of Folly*, whereby he means the exceeding sinfulness of every Course that a natural Man can take for his Happiness, according to the Apostles Expression, *Rom. 7. 13.* especially Mens giving themselves up to their sensual Pleasures, wherein they are most mad, as the following words make evident. All which may make the Light held forth by him very acceptable.

Hence Learn 1. As it is the Commendation of a Preacher of the Truth, that he speak from *Experience*, especially when he commends the way of God, having put the matter to the proof himself, and found all that he speaks verified: So this should commend the Truth to the People, and add weight to it, when beside the Evidence and Authority of it in it self, they hear it commended by those, whom they may in Charity judge to have tasted the Sweetness of it, and do therefore speak because they believe: For *Solomon* having commended heaven-

ly Wisdom that it brings *Life* ver. 12. and *Strength* ver. 19. to them that are indued with it, he here commends it from his own Experience, *All this have I proved by wisdom.*

2. Those whom the Lord hath indued with the greatest measure of Saving Knowledge, and upon whom He minds to bestow yet a greater measure thereof, He uses to give to those, strong desires after more and more of it, and a resolute purpose to pursue it in the use of all lawful means: For *Solomon* who had great Wisdom, and thereby acquired Experience, lays down a fixed Resolution to have yet more, *All this have I proved by wisdom, I said I will be Wise.*

3. Those who have the greatest measure of Knowledge, and whose desires after more are strongest, will still be short of what may be attained, and the farther they promote they will still be the more humble, and sensible of their short coming; they that know least do often think they know most, and do imagine more than their own measure, needless: For even *Solomon* doth here humbly regrave his short coming, *But it was far from me.*

4. There is such a great depth of Wisdom in all the works of God, especially in His works of Providence, that it is not possible for the shallow witt of Man to attain to a fully clear, or satisfying sight thereof; the sharpest sighted will find himself in the dark, and therefore must adore and reverence what he cannot fully comprehend, perswading himself, that that is wisely done, whereof he sees not always a satisfactory Reason; and should look upon that which may be learned farther of every work of Providence (in reference to his own natural ability to comprehend it) as a Pearl lying at the bottom of the Sea, or some precious Commodity, at the farthest part of the Earth. *That which is far off, and exceeding deep who can find it?*

5. Neither the profound mysteriousness of Gods Wisdom manifested in His Dispensations, nor the weakness of our Capacity, should discourage the Students of that Wisdom, who would

be

be wise unto Salvation, but should so much the more sharpen their desires, and quicken their endeavours, after a farther measure of Knowledge, seeing there is a growing success promised to such. *Hos. 6. 3.* For so was it with *Solomon*, though he found *Wisdom* far off, and exceeding deep; yet (saith he) *I applied my Heart to know, and to search, and to seek.*

6. They that would be Proficients in true Knowledge, must apply their Hearts to that study, they must carry a present composed mind always about with them, and be busie in observing what may be known of God, that may draw their Affections to Him, and engage them to His Service, and after disappointment of desired success, and darkness remaining, must renew their endeavours in the use of one commanded mean after another: For so was it with *Solomon*, *I applied my Heart* (or as the Original may be rendred, *I and my Heart went about together*) *to search and seek out Wisdom*, what he could not find out by *Searching*, he *sought out*, which is one endeavour after another.

7 They that would judge aright of the Lord's Dispensations, must labour to see by the light of the Word and Spirit, what Reasons there may be for them: As for Example, why the Lord suffers His people to be brought so low in the World; even that He may humble them and prove them; and do them good in the latter end, *Deus. 8. 16.* And why He suffers wicked Men to prosper, even that it they will not by His Goodness be led to Repentance, they may be the riper for Destruction, *Rom. 2. 4. Ps. 92. 7* that so we may satisfie our own minds, and be able to give a Reason to others of what we profess to know: For this was one thing that *Solomon* made his study, *To know the reason of things.*

8 That which is truly good is more clearly seen when we consider the evil that is contrary to it: The Beauty of Holiness, and excellency of Saving Knowledge is illustrat, and best seen, when the deformity of Sin, the madness and unreasonableness

of these Courses which natural Men take to come at their imaginary Happines, are compared therewith: For Solomon took this way. *He gave his Heart to know Wisdom, and to know the wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madness.*

9. As every Man who is not indued with Saving *Wisdom*, is desperat in *Wickedness*, and extremely *Mad* in following the course that will be his ruine: So there is such a height of wickedness, and perversity in his way, that it is not easy to expresse the same: For Solomon multiplies words to that purpose, as if it had been difficult for him to expresse it, while he calls it, *The wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madness.*

10. The knowledge of the evil of Sin, the *madness and Folly* that is in Sinners way, the desperat wickedness that is in their Hearts, while they are in pursuit of their Lusts, is one part of Saving *Wisdom*, which all should study, that would be truly happy: For this is it which Solomon endeavoured to know, *The wickedness of Folly, even of Foolishness and Madness.*

Vcr. 26. *And I find more bitter than Death, the Woman whose Heart is Snares and Nets, and her Hands as Bands: whose pleasures God shall escape from her, but the Sinner shall be taken by her.*

THIS Wife Man having regrated the imperfection of his Knowledge, notwithstanding of his most serious inquiry after it, formerly mentioned, hedoth here and in the following words give instances of some success he had of his pains.

The *First* is, concerning the Evil of sinful Pleasures, particularly the satisfying of the Lusts of the Flesh: And in setting forth this, he doth *First* describe a Whorish Woman from two things: The 1. is, That *her Heart is Snares and Nets*, the meaning whereof is, That *her Heart* being under the power of her Lusts, doth catch every Temptation to that Sin of Un-
clea

cleanness, which is explained by that Expression *Pf. 41. 6. The Heart gathers iniquity to it self*; And likewise that her Heart is full of subtle Plots and Insinuations to insnare Men, and draw them to her desires, as Fowlers and Fishers have their Nets and Baits, to entangle Birds and Fishes, which are the Metaphores in the Words. 2. That *her Hands are as Bands*; whereby are meant her powerful Stratagems to hold Men fast Slaves to her, and their own Lusts.

Next, He giveth some Arguments to deterr the Hearts of all from being entangled with Temptations of this sort. 1. That he himself had found in his own experience, and did in part yet feel the bitterness of giving way to that Sin of Impurity, which is so *Butter* that Temporal Death is to be preferred to the base Slavery of it: By which it seems very clear, not only that *Solomon* was a true Penitent, but that this Book hath been written after, and in testimony of his Repentance, seeing at the writting hereof his Uncleanness was so *butter* to him, that he cannot express it, but by calling it *more grievous than Death* it self, to wit, Temporal Death, which only deprives Men of their Natural Life, and the Comforts of it, but these sinful Pleasures deprive them of Spiritual Life, and the Comforts of Communion with God. 2. That the Man who is *Favoured of God*, in a special way. shall escape such Temptations, that is, either he shall not be entangled with them, or shall be mercifully rescued from them, and consequently as himself expresses this same purpose, *Prov. 22. 14.* they must be *Abhorred of God* who are given up to them. 3. That this Sin of Uncleanness is often the punishment of other Sins. *The Sinner* (saith he) *shall be taken by her*: By the *Sinner* is not meant every one that deserves that Name, for then all should be taken: but by the *Sinner* (as is usual in Scripture when that Name is opposed to the Godly, or the upright Person) is meant, One given up, or giving himself up to Sin, and making a Trade of living in it, such a Man is justly left to fall into this most bitter, and abominable Sin of Uncleanness.

Hence

Hence Learn 1. Whatever dissatisfaction sincere Students of Saving Knowledge, may have with their measure, they shall be sure to find success in that which tends most to their true Happiness, and to the preventing of their Eternal Ruine: For Solomon having regreted his short-coming in the study of *Wisdom* before, cannot but acknowledge that he was not altogether unsuccessful, *And I find more bitter, &c.*

2. To feel experimentally the bitterness of Sin, and to have a lively representation of the hazard of living in it, is not the least part of the success of Mens pains for Saving Knowledge: For without this they can know nothing Savingly: Therefore this is one Instance which Solomon expresseth as a Blessed Fruit of his pains, that he found sinful Pleasures, *More bitter than Death*:

3. However Sinners apprehend much pleasure in Sin, when they commit it; yet there is a woful Sting afterward, and much *Bitterness* in the latter end of it, every Penitent finds it in mercy so *Bitter* to him when his Conscience is awakened, that he would rather venture upon Temporal *Death*, than enjoy his sinful Pleasures again: And impenitent Sinners find it so in Wrath here sometimes, by the Stings of an accusing Conscience; especially while Poverty, Disgrace, and loathsome Diseases making their Lives *Bitter*, are upon them, *Prov. 5. 11.* and always at Death, and after it to Eternity, *Eccles. 12. 1. &c.* So that all that ever took pleasure in Sin, shall be forced to speak this Language one time or other, *I find it more bitter than Death.*

4. When Sinners are left to the power of their Lusts, they are very studious to ensnare others, those that are weakest before Temptations, are often strongest to ensnare, and hold others fast in the Snare with them, and they are plagued with *subtlety* of Wit for that end: For the *whorish Womans Heart and Hand* go together, *her Heart is Snarcs and Nets, and her Hands Bands.*

5. As the Temptations to the Sin of Uncleanness, especially from lascivious and light Women, are *subtle* and not easily discerned; so when Men are once entangled in that Sin, they are often

often made absolute Slaves to it, and held fast in it, it is not an easie matter to reclaim any such, only God's Wisdom must discover the *Net and the Snare*, and His Power must loose the Bands: For as *her Heart is Snares and Nets*, which are set so as they are not seen, so *her Hands are as Bands*.

6. If Men intangled with the pleasures of Sin, especially the base Bewitching inticements of Whorish *Women*, could look right upon their own case, they would see themselves like silly Birds or Fishes deprived of their true liberty, and Caught in the Devils *Net* to be preyed upon, but such Slaves think their Bondage, Liberty: For *her heart is Snares and Nets, and her hands Bands*.

7. As it is a great sign of Gods special Favour and delight in a person to be kept from sinful Snares, or to be liberat after they are intangled with them, so the best way to be kept free of them, or to escape from them, is to make the pleasure of God our Pleasure: So should Men find as much true Pleasure in Gods Service and Communion with him, as would make sinful pleasures loathsome to them; For saith he, *whose pleaseth God* (the Words signifie either one Favoured by and pleasing to God, or one that studies to please him) *shall escape from her*.

8. It is not so much Mens natural disposition to Chastity, their Education, fear of Shame, or Censure, their own Vows, Resolutions, or Crosses, as it is Gods *taking Pleasure* in them, and his setting them in the way that pleases Him, to which their Preservation or Deliverance from Temptations is to be attributed: For (saith he) *Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her*.

9. Those who habituate themselves to other Sins (suppose them less, and more secret) and make a Trade of Living in them, are ordinarily given up to those more gross disgraceful and vile Sins of Fornication, Whoredom and the like: For *the Sinner* who (as was cleared in the Exposition) is one, *giving up himself to a Trade of Sinning shall be taken by her*.

Ver. 27. *Behold this have I found (saith the Preacher) counting one by one to find out the Account.*

28. *Which yet my Soul seeketh, but I find not: One Man among a Thousand have I found, but a Woman among all these have I not found.*

Here is the Second Branch of the success of the pains which Solomon took to know the evil of Sin, and it is that he had observed it, a very rare, and consequently a difficult thing, for one insnared with the pleasures of Sin, especially the Lusts of the Flesh, to make an escape therefrom, or recover themselves by true Repentance.

And to make his Testimony in this have the more weight and credit. He 1. calls all to consider it as experimentally known to himself. 2. He mindes them again of his Calling, which did fit him, and oblige him to search, and hold forth what might be most profitable for the Church, 3. He shews how exact a survey he had taken of many particular persons, and their Cases, not as a man would determine the number of some great Flock, by taking a general view of them, but as one that *Counts them all One by One.* 4. That he was yet upon that Search, very desirous to find examples of Gods power and Mercy in reclaiming Sinners, and delivering Satans Captives, but with grief he regrates he could find few or none. 5. He shews some success that he had, even in this inquiry, he had found *ONE among a Thousand*, by which *ONE* may be meant some few whom he had observed to be reclaimed by Gods Grace: Or by this *One* he may understand *Himself*, who was a Penitent, But a *Woman among so many he had not found*; this is not spoken to derogate from the one sexe more than the other, for both are alike impotent in order to their recovery out of Temptations *Rom. 3. 23. Gal. 6. 3.* And Solomon himself did know some Gracious Women. *2 Chron 9. 1.* And frequently commends such *Prov. 19. 14. and 31. 30.* But he seems

seems to speak of these Idolatrous and Whorish Women of the *Mobabites, Ammonites, and Egyptians*, who had *stolen away his heart from God*: For *1 King 11. 3.* it is marked that there was such a number of those as is here mentioned; and it seems he hath not observed any of them all, Penitents; though he doth not determine but some of them might be so: Or we may take him here to speak only of *Women*, under this particular consideration as *Inticing*, and drawing away Men to Wickedness; according to the Description given of them in the former verse; and of such he had observed few or none reclaimed, from their Vileness.

Hence Learn. 1. The Lord hath vouchsafed upon his Church, the help of the experience of the Pen-men of Scripture, to commend his Truth, that Men may be the more afraid to slight it, considering that those who deliver it, may be Witnesses against them, upon a double account, both that they have spoken in the Lords name, and that they have spoken their own experience: *Behold this have I found (saith the Preacher)*.

2. Hearers of the Word had need to mind often the warrant and Authority of the Speaker, lest they take the Word as the word of a Man only: For it is not without cause that *Solomon* mentions his *Ecclesiastick* Office here again, *This have I found, saith the Preacher*.

3. They that would have their Experiences well grounded, must go thorow many particulars, and consider many persons and cases, wherein they have observed the Conclusion they draw to be verified, As for example, they that would be persuaded of Gods willingness and readiness to Pardon and Comfort humble Sinners; they must count all the instances they can in Scripture, or otherwise, of such particular persons as he hath pardoned and comforted, and so they that would be confirmed and confirm others of the Truth of this, that there is such a power in Temptations, and such impotency in persons

once enslaved with them, that few or none of them escape, in comparison of those who remain Slaves till they Perish; they must go thorow many instances to see this Truth verified: For so did Solomon here counting One by One to find out the Account.

4. True Penitents are very desirous to see other Sinners, especially those who have been their Companions in Sin, mercifully and powerfully reclaimed, because they exceedingly thirst that the same Grace which pardoned, and reclaimed them, may be Glorious in the same effects toward others: For Solomon who was a Penitent. *And One man among a Thousand himself* faith (while he wrote this) *that he was yet seeking to find out some farther instances of this nature, Which yet my Soul seeketh.*

5. Though there be not wanting rare examples recorded in Scripture of the power and freedom of Gods Rich Grace in reclaiming some of the vilest of Sinners, and of those a considerable number if they be considered in themselves, yet considering them comparatively with the great number of those who being once intangled, especially with Temptations pleasant to the Flesh, are never reclaimed, but perish in their Sins, the number is but *very few*, and as it were *One among a Thousand*. For this is it the Preacher faith, *he found One (and but One) Man among a Thousand.*

6. Of all Sinners in the world those who have been most active to draw others to the same Sin with themselves, and have been most successful that way, are most hardly reclaimed, and the examples of such are rarest (though some such there be *Act. 26. 21*). For it is of such *Women* whose *Hearts are Nets and Snarls* and their *Hands Bonds*, that Solomon speaks (and certainly the truth holds no less as to such Men also) while he faith *a Woman among all those have I not found.*

7. That which is most difficult in it self, and therefore most rare, is very easy, and ordinary to Gods free and powerful Grace, when he pleases to manifest it: For, he who is greater than

than Solomon, Christ Jesus, gave proofs of his power and Mercy in reclaiming such Harlots as Solomon here speaks of. *Luk. 7. 37. Job. 4. 17. &c.* Though Solomon having Counted One by One could not find One of a Thousand.

8. A Sinner may attain to Repentance, and confidence of Mercy, though he know no such rare Motiument of Mercy as himself, nor *One of a Thousand* involved in the same guilt with him, truly Penitent: *Paul* knew not his match, nor *Solomon* his, and yet both were Penitent Believers, *One Man among a Thousand have I found*, it is probable he means himself; but a Woman among all those (that is of such a number) *have I not found*, it is probable he means the Thousand that inticed him to Idolatry.

9. It is not Wisdom for any to conclude, that there are none reclaimed or Penitent, even among the greatest Sinners in the World, though they cannot after most serious Consideration of them and their case, conclude any of them such, or see evidences thereof in them, there may be *Seven Thousand* where the sharpest sighted cannot see *One of a Thousand*. *1 King. 19. 18.* We ought still to intertain hopes and desires that there may be some such though we cannot find them: For *Solomon* doth not deny such a thing to be possible, that there might be many among a Thousand, only he saith, among all those he found *None*.

Ver. 29. *Lo this only have I found, that God hath made Man upright; but They have sought out many Inventions:*

HERE are the two last Branches of his success in taking pains for knowledge, held forth in two Conclusions, drawn from the consideration of Gods wise and holy Dispensations with Man, and Mans perverse carriage toward God.

The first is that *God made Man upright*, this is the same with the expression of *making Man according to the Image of God*, or as the word here signifies, *Straight*, that is, conform to the will of God, and indued with Original Righteousness; So that

his Majesty is free of all the Sin and Misery that is come upon Man: And while he saith he found *this only*, to wit, this which he Branches out here in two Conclusions, it is not to be understood as if he had found no other thing by his Inquiry formerly mentioned, for he sets down several things, he had found before; But the meaning is, that these two serving most to justify God, and humble Man as the cause of his own Sin and Misery, were the most satisfying considerations; Or *this only* he found farther (beside what is formerly express'd) fit to be Communicate as the result of his pains for Wisdom ver. 25. Neither is this to be understood as if Solomon had now first of all found out these Truths here express'd, seeing they are plainly revealed by Moses Gen. 5. 1. And 6. 5. And surely he was trained up in the Knowledge of them, but that he had gotten a new sight of them, and had read them of new upon the Lords Dispensations with Man, and the bad meeting which Man gives to God.

The Second Conclusion is *They have sought out many Inventions*, the meaning whereof is, that Adams Posterity can do nothing now but devise and multiply *Curious Artificial ways*, the word *Inventions* signifies, for dishonouring God, and making themselves Miserable: Now he changes the person here, having spoken of *Man* in the singular number, he now speaks of *All Men* in the Plural, whereof three Reasons may be given. 1. Because he would Caution what he spoke in the former Verse, lest any might think there were some degree of Original Perversity, peculiar to the one Sexe, which the other hath not, therefore he charges this equally upon the whole Posterity of Adams. 2. Because he would have all looking upon Adam as comprehending all mankind, receiving and losing what he had, not only for himself, but for *all his Posterity*. And 3. Because all that are come of him, are but parts of him, and so, in the former part of the verse, he speaks of mankind in the Root, and that in Integrity, here he speaks of the same both in the Root and Branches, as fallen and corrupt.

Hence

Hence Learn. 1. These Truths which are plainly revealed in the Word, and which we have Learned from it before, we should labour to find them out by our own Experience and Observation, as written and to be read upon the Lords Dispensations with Men, and their carriage toward him; when they are so found out they become very sweet, they have a new Relish, and satisfaction to the Soul: For *Solomon* who probably, read these same things in the Scriptures formerly cited, concerning Mans primitive Integrity and Original Righteousness wherein he was created, and concerning his fall, and corrupting of himself, doth here speak of them as found out by him, upon that diligent search of *Wisdom*, and of the *Wickedness of Folly and Madness*, formerly mentioned, *This only have I found, That God made Man upright, but They have sought out many Inventions.*

2. They that seriously consider Gods Wisdom in the course of his Providence, and the perverse and mad Courses that Men follow, will from the one find that God is to be justified as free of Mans Sin and Misery, and so may be helped to assent to this Truth revealed in the Word, *that God made Man upright* at the first, seeing they will find him incouraging Men to well-doing, and frequently rectifying his displeasure against their Impiety. And from the other they may read, that Men only are to be blamed for all the Sin and Misery that is come upon them, while they may be observed ordinarily Sinning against their light, and the checks of their Conscience, and omitting much good which is in their power to do: For these two are here exprest as Observations which *Solomon* made upon Gods wise way with Men, and Mens perverse way before the Lord, *This only have I found, that God made Man upright, but They have sought out many Inventions.*

3. That which we should mainly aim at in our Observations of the Lords Dispensations, and Mens carriage before him, is to find cause of justifying and exalting God, and of condemning

demning and debasing Man: For saith *Solomon, this Only, or Mainly have I found, That God made Man upright, but They have sought out many Inventions.*

4. When Man came first from the hand of him that formed him, there was no deformity in him, he was made *Straight* (as the word *Upright* signifies) not only as to the structure of his Body, whereby he excels other Creatures, and should be taught to mind things Heavenly, and not to ly groveling like a beast upon the Earth, in sensual Pleasures common to him with the beast, but mainly in respect of the constitution of his Soul, he was *Upright*, his mind or thoughts and conceptions being clear, and his will and affections conform to the will of his Maker. The Lord hath done nothing since to deface that frame, Satan and Mens Corruption have done all that, so that God is free of all that ruine that is come upon Man: For *God made Man upright.*

5. Before renewing Grace make a change upon Men, they are not only prone to welcome and yeild to Temptations, when they are offered, and to follow the Sinful *Inventions* of others before them; but they are all of them very *Ingenious* and have much Art to devise new ways of Sinning against God, and covering the same with fair pretences, and are very active to put the same in Execution: For so doth *Solomon* here represent the temper of fallen Men, *They have sought out many Inventions.*

6. There is not any of *Adams* Posterity descended from him by ordinary Generation, who is free of this infection of Original Sin, the Virgine Mary is not excepted. The *Second Adam* only is free, who is not come of the first as others of his Posterity are *Luk. 1. 35.* For speaking without exception of any he saith, *They have sought out many inventions.*

7. The first Man *Adam* was a publick person representing all that were to come of him. see, *Rom. 5. 12* So that what he lost was lost to all his off-spring who are but parts of him, and that vitious frame of Spirit which he contracted is proppagat to all his Posterity

sterity: For Solomon having said *Man*, or (as it is in the Original) *Adam* was made upright, he changes the person, supposing *all his Posterity* to have fallen in him, from that uprightness: *They have sought out many Inventions.*

CH A P. VIII.

THE ARGUMENT

SOLOMON in the 1 part of this Chapter to ver. 9. being to induce to the study of heavenly Wisdom, and to direct to the evidencing of it in the conversation, in order to solid peace of Mind, Doth 1. give a high commendation both of the persons indued with it, as far better (being compared with them) than those that are void of it; and as being tho^t for number few, yet for capacity able in some measure to take up the Mind of God in His Word, and rightly construct of His Works according thereto, and in their station to teach and explain them to others, ver. 1. And likewise of this Saving Wisdom it self, partly from the Beauty and Lustre that is put upon the outward Deportment, and partly from the renewed strength and courage to go on in duty against Difficulties which it affordeth ver 1. 11. He directeth as a special evidence of this Spiritual Wisdom, unto the giving of due obedience unto the lawful Commands of lawful Magistrats. ver. 2. Which (1) he argueth by an Argument taken from the obligation Men are under, either in general, by Oath and Covenant with God, tying them to the Duties contained in the Fifth Command; or in particular, by the Oath and mutual Covenant betwixt the Magistrat and People, obliging them thereunto, which he confirms by calling it the Oath of God, being commanded and allowed by Him, made unto and before Him, and who will reward the Keepers, and punish the Breakers of it. ver. 2. (2) He disswadeth from some Evils contrary to this lawful obedience: As First, from rash and sudden casting off the yoke of due Allegiance and Subjection to lawful Magistrats, by going out from them either to rebel against them, or join with their Enemies. ver. 3. And Secondly, from persisting in that course of Rebellion, when engaged in it, ver. 3. Especially considering the absolute Power, the great Terror, and uncontrollable Disposition that Princes ordinarily have, for enabling them to reckon with those that offend them. ver. 3, 4. And (3) setteth down positively the best way of walking towards them that are in lawful Authority, and for escaping trouble from them, or enduring it with a good Conscience when called to bear it, to be a conscientious

obedience unto the Commands of God, the Supreme Law-giver, and unto the Commands of Lawful Authority, as they are conform therunto. ver. 5. Which he presseth on the account, that as this if it do not ward off outward trouble, yet will make that nothing of that kind they meet with, shall be an Evil to them, but work effectually for their Good; so shall it be a choise evidence of Spiritual Wisdom, in discerning the fit times and seasons either of doing or suffering, and understanding the just grounds and right manner of managing either of them. ver. 5. (4) He layeth before Men (with a special Eye to their carriage towards those in Authority) the woful case, both in regard of guilt and punishment of those that are void of Saving Wisdom, as a strong inducement to the study of it: Evidenced First from this, That altho' there be times and seasons for both doing and suffering ver. 6. yet in regard of Man's own ignorance, and his conceited inability in others (especially when God keeps it up) to teach him his duty, and the right manner of going about it, or the things that shall befall him (so far as by the light of the Word and Spirit, he may, and is fit for him to know) or what ground of consolation he may have, whatever future events be, he is ready to run himself headlong into a great deal of guilt and misery (taking Light for Darknes) in misse his purposes and actions, in misjudging of things, and mistaking the right way of going about that which is good in it self. ver. 6, 7. Secondly, From the certainty of the Death of all Men, as a peculiar part of the misery of those destitute of Saving Wisdom, considering their ignorance of the time thereof, their unwillingness so, and unpreparedness for it, and having nothing to uphold their Hearts against it, which ought strongly to dissuade them from inconsiderate throwing themselves upon the Sword of the Magistrate, and for that end move them to perform their duty towards them, since no Man hath power to retain his Soul in his Body, when God, by the sentence of the Magistrate, or any other way calleth for it, or to do any thing at that time, either to resist or shift Death; And that continued wickedness shall not make their escape from it. ver. 8. And in closing this part of the Chapter, he confirms his former Doctrine, anent the Happiness of them that were indued with Spiritual Wisdom, and the Misery of them that were destitute of it, from his own experience of the truth of both, obtained partly by his own observation of, and diligent search into the Works of God's Providence, that were within the reach of his elevated Understanding: And partly by the Illumination and Inspiration of the Lord's Spirit, for communicating thereof unto the Church. ver. 9.

In the Second part of this Chapter, the Wise Man by so many Arguments, proveth the Vanity of worldly Greatness, especially where it is accompanied with the want of Heavenly Wisdom, and a constant course of Sin, tending to prevent the Humbling of the Saints, and to encourage them under their Sufferings from such Men. The First is taken from his own observation, of the Misery of some that have been highly advanced in the World, while by the abuse of their power, they not only prejudice others, but often brings Temporal, and always (if not by Repentance prevented) Eternal Wrath upon themselves. ver. 9. II. He evidenceth

this, That notwithstanding the high advancement of such Men, in their frequenting the places of, and concernment in publick Indicators, and Religious Worship; yet they should be buried and put under the Earth, whereas they placed their Happiness, and their Memories which they designed to perpetuate after Death, shall be forgotten among Men. ver. 10. Which he amplifies, by giving the Reason why such Men are so bent upon their sinful Courses and oppressing ways, namely because the declared Threatnings in Scripture are not presently after their committing Sin put to execution against them. ver. 11.

III. That he may farther shew the Vanity of Worldly Greatness without Saving Knowledge, and that sinful Courses are not sure ways to preserve from Evil, and to guard the Hearts of Saints from stumbling at such Mens Greatness, and encourage them under their Oppressions by them, he publisheth to the terror of all such wicked Men, especially oppressing Rulers, That notwithstanding their fancying that by their long Life, affluence of outward Comforts, and their multiplied Transgressions, they should escape the Judgement of God. ver. 12. Yet (tho' he certainly concludeth the Welfare of them that sincerely Fear God, and His Goodness, for which wicked Men did persecute and oppress them. ver. 12.) he in a powerful and pathetick way, denounceth Wrath against them, both in general. That it shall not be well with them (where more is meant than expressed) and in particular, That tho' he may have a long Life compared with others, yet shall he not prolong his days, either to that length he desired, or to an Eternity of Happiness. ver. 13. Which he amplifies First, By a description of the Life of such wicked Men, that it is but a shadow, not so much for the brevity of it, as that it is driven on without that substantial and solid Life of Grace and Comfort, and at last shall totally as a shadow vanish. And Secondly, By setting down the cause of all the Wrath that comes upon those wicked Men (which also is the Mother of their other Sins) to be the want of a Filial Fear of God. ver. 13. As also he amplifieth the former consolation given to the Godly. First, By setting down the ground of their discouragement to be, That ordinarily (tho' the Reason of it be not generally obvious to Men) it falleth out in providence (not without the Fore-knowledge, wise Ordering and Permission of God) that the Godly are dealt with in the World, as to their outward lot, no better than the worst of Men, and the wicked, as if they were the best of Men in the World; which he censureth as a Vanity, not as reflecting on the Wise and Holy Providence of God, but as it is the fruit of Mens corruption (especially Wicked Rulers) who are instrumental in it, and as it proves the Vanity of any earthly condition for affording Men true Happiness. ver. 14. And Secondly, He affordeth a Remedy against discouragement from, and stumbling at, these Dispensations; namely, the exercise of Spiritual (not Carnal) Mirth or Rejoicing. ver. 15. Which he commendeth partly from the advantage of it, that it is the best of it in this Life, even under sad Dispensations, to be cheerful in the lawful and sober use of the outward Comforts (be they great or small) which God allows upon them. ver. 15. And partly from the security of it to them, as

being God's constant allowance upon them (tho' sometimes through their own default they may be without it) which if they will in the way of Duty seek after and improve, they shall not be deprived of (as much at least of it as may occasion their Joy in Him) during the whole time of their Pilgrimage under the Sun. ver. 15. IV. And Lastly, That he may humble the greatest Searchers into Wisdom and various Providences, He giveth a modest account. 1. Of his persons, and extraordinary care and diligence, experimentally and affectionately to know the Affairs (both Humane Rulses, and Divine Dispensations) upon Earth, ver. 16, 17. Then 2. Of his success in that Study, that even the Godly (much less the Natural Man with all his Gifts) notwithstanding all their pains and Advantages of the Word and Spirit, Opportunities, Abilities, Resolutions and strong Endeavours to reach it, cannot attain to the full and satisfying Knowledge of the Reasons of God's various Dispensations on the Earth, but must sit down and Admire, and Adore the depth of His Wisdom in, and be humbled under the sense of his ignorance of them. ver. 17.

C H A P. VIII.

Ver. 1. *Who is as the Wise Man? and who knows the interpretation of a thing? a Mans Wisdom maketh his Face to shine, and the boldness of his Face shall be changed.*

Solomon being in the first part of this Chapter to give several Directions for the manifesting of Heavenly Wisdom in a Christians Conversation, in order to the true Peace and Tranquility of his Mind. He doth in this Verse First commend the person indued with that Knowledge, *Who is as the Wise Man?* The Question may be explained by a Negation, There is none to be compared with the Man that hath that excellent Knowledge which Paul commends, *Phil. 3. 8.* there is not his Match or Peer in all the World beside.

Next, He describes him who is indued with this Knowledge, in another Question, *Who knows the interpretation of a thing?* Importing that he who is truly Wise doth know it. that

that is, he takes up the Mind of God in His Word, and in His Works, and can in some measure clearly explain the same to others, according to his Place and Calling. The Question also imports, that there are few of such to be found. *Thirdly*, He commends this Knowledge from two lovely and desirable effects of it. 1. That it makes a Mans Face to shine, which is not to be understood as if it put always such a Divine Lustre, and visible Beauty upon them that have it, as was upon the Faces of *Moses* and *Stephen*, though the Expression here may allude to that of *Moses*: But by the shining of the Face is meant, the appearing of the Beauty of Holiness in the Mans outward Deportment, *Phil. 2. 15.* and such an Holy Cheerfulness, as makes him lovely to all discerning On-lookers. 2. That the boldness of his Face shall be changed. the Words may be translated the Strength or Courage of his Countenance shall be doubled, that is, A Mans knowledge of God in Christ, and of his Duty, shall make him bold as a Lyon in following of his Duty, and always his Strength and Courage shall be changed, or doubled from one measure to another, as Difficulties are multiplied in his way. *Psal. 84. 7.*

Hence Learn. 1. There is no Man to be found in the World void of the Saving Knowledge of God in Christ, who is worthy to be compared with him that hath that Knowledge, which teaches a Man to go out of himself to Christ for Righteousness, *Philip. 3. 8, 9.* to walk in the Fear of the Lord, *Prov. 1. 7.* and to subdue his own Corruptions, *1am. 3. 13. 14.* Let a Man have never so much worldly Wisdom, Riches, or Honour, these cannot make him worthy to be laid in the Ballance with a Man wanting all these, providing he have this heavenly Wisdom, this is an excellent Man indeed, and there is not his Peer in the World beside, as is imported in this Question, *Who is as the Wise Man.*

2. They that have most of this Heavenly Wisdom, they will prize it most, and the Persons that are indued with it:

For it is he who had a great measure of this Wisdom, and knew also what other Qualifications and Gifts were to Men who thus prefers the truly Wise Man as one matchless, *Who is as the Wise Man.*

3. Heavenly and saving Wisdom manifests it self in the clear uptaking of the mind of God in his Word, and putting a right construction and *Interpretation* upon his Operations according to the word, and being able to explain and clear the same to these under our charge, and with whom we have a call to deal, and so every one who hath either Child, Servant or Friend, is an *Interpreter*: For this question may be taken for a Description of every truly Wise, and Godly Man, supposing him to be such an one as is here inquired For: *Who knows the Interpretation of a thing.*

4. There are few of these excellent Ones to be found who have this clear Knowledge to take up Gods mind in his Word, and Works, where the same is not obvious and needs Interpretation, and to make plain the same to others, and who have an Heart to it: For the Paucity and Rarity of those may be also imported in this second Question, *Who knows the Interpretation of a thing.*

5. As Lusts reigning in the Hearts of Men will readily bewray their power in the external carriage, *Isai. 3. 9. 2 Pet. 2. 14.* So Gods powerful and saving Grace where it is abounding, and lively in the Soul, will manifest it self in the effects of it, upon the outward carriage and deportment of them that are indued with it; as is imported in this, *a Mans Wisdom makes his Face to shine.*

6. Saving Wisdom manifests it self by beautifying the persons indued with it, in so far as it sets them upon an Holy walking suitable to the Gospel, which hath a great Beauty in the Eyes of them whom the God of this World hath not Blinded: And in so far as it teaches them how to apply the Oyl of Gladness, the Consolations of Christs Spirit which *makes their Face to shine.*

shine by humble cheerfulness, even in their saddest times. *Act. 16. 25.* And *6. 15.* For by the *shinning of the Face* is chiefly meant the *divine Beauty of Holiness and spiritual Joy* shining in a Christians Conversation, and this is made the effect of that Wisdom which proves the Man singular and Praise worthy that is indued with it, *Who is as the Wise Man? &c. A mans Wisdom makes his Face to shine.*

7. As they that know God in Christ savingly may resolve upon difficulties and opposition in following of their Duty, against which they have need of much Holy *Boldness* and Courage, so they may expect to have as much hereof, as they shall not be forced from their Duty by any Opposition, that they shall become a Terror to their very Enemies and Opposers. *1 Sam. 18. 11. Mark. 6. 20. Act. 6. 10.* That they shall have much humble *Boldness* and confidence toward God *Eph. 3. 12.* And all these upon the growing hand, as Temptations and difficulties are doubled, *Job. 17. 9.* For of such he saith. *The Boldness of his Face shall be changed.*

8. Men destitute of this excellent and saving Knowledge, are but deformed in the Eyes of God, and spiritual Onlookers, though for external Beauty they were like *Absalom*; they are but base Cowards, being Slaves to their own Lusts, though for Strength and Courage they were like *Goliath*. For the contrary of this must agree to the person that wants this Wisdom, seeing it is affirmed of him that hath it as his peculiar excellency, *It makes his Face to shine, and the Boldness of his Countenance shall be changed.*

VER. 2. *I Counsel thee to keep the Kings Commandment, and that in regard of the Oath of God.*

HERE is the first direction for manifesting that Heavenly Wisdom formerly commended in order to true peace and tranquility of mind, and it is to give Obedience to *Lawful Magistrates* in things *Lawful*, for it cannot be thought that he presses upon people, an universal or unlimited obedience to
Kings

Kings or Magistrates, ſeing that were expreſſly contrary to the clear mind of God in other places of his word *Dan. 3. 18. Ad. 4. 19. 20.* And to *Solomons* own mind in this ſame place, as will appear afterward, and this direction he preſſes in a very Emphatick way, he being a *King* himſelf he doth not command, but rather ſpeaks as a *Preacher*, and though his mind be clear, yet it is not fully expreſt: For the word *Counſel* is not in the Original which is only *I-----thee to keep &c.* importing his Seriouſneſs, as if no one ſtrain could have weight enough for inforcing this Duty, and with all his ſparing to ſpeak imperiouſly, while he calls for that Duty which his Relation to the People called for to himſelf at their hands, and therefore is fitly ſupplied by this *I Counſel thee.*

And this Direction he inforces by a Reason that qualifies the Duty *because of the Oath of God*, which may be underſtood of that general Oath or Covenant with God which all Chriſtians are ſuppoſed to be under, whereby they are engaged to the obedience of his will in his ſtrength, and conſequently to the Duties of the fifth Commandment *Pſal. 76. 11. Iſa. 19. 21.* And ſo it limits our obedience to Magiſtrats that it be ſuch as may conſiſt with the Duties of our Oaths and engagements to God the Supreme Magiſtrat, or it may be meant of that particular Oath or Covenant which is between Prince and People to ſuch mutual Duties of their Relation, as are enjoined in the word of God in ſubſtance, and are only in that Solemn Oath or Covenant circumſtantiated and determined as to the time and manner of performance of them, with particular application to the conſtitution, condition and Laws of every Kingdom or Commonwealth. *1 Chron. 11. 3.* And either of theſe ways it is *the Oath of God*, becauſe it ſhould be taken in obedience to him, it is made to him, and ſhould be made Conſcience of as in his ſight, who will puniſh the Breakers of it.

Hence Learn. 1. That which Beautifies a Chriſtian, gives him much Courage and Boldneſs in his Duty, and ſo mani-
feſts

sests him to be indued with saving Wisdom, is the conscionable discharge of the Duties of his particular Relations, especially toward those who are above him: Be what he will otherwise if he be not conscionable in these, he cannot adorn Religion, nor have Courage under Trials, for having commended the person indued with this Heavenly Wisdom, and shewn the sweet Advantages and effects of it, he comes here particularly to press some Duties wherein it is manifested, of which this is one prest upon Subjects, *I Counsel thee to keep the Kings Commandment.*

2. True Religion is a good Friend to Civil Magistracy, by the Precepts thereof it gains them all due respect and obedience from their Subjects, therefore the best Policy of Magistrates is to propagat the sound Knowledge of Gods word, and encourage all the faithful Interpreters thereof, those will keep down Sedition, and will press upon People by the strongest Arguments all Duties that Lawful Magistrates can in Reason desire from People: For the Spirit of God puts this Counsel in the Mouth of this Heavenly Preacher, to be Registrar for the use of the Church, and prest upon People by all Faithful Preachers living under lawful Magistrates: *I Counsel thee to keep the Kings Commandment.*

3. Mens modesty who are called to any eminent Office should not hinder them to call for due respect and obedience to themselves from those under their charge; only lest they may be thought to be seeking themselves in so doing, they should use Counsel before Commands, and back it with Reasons: They are often too forgetful of their own Duty who are imperious, and rigid Exactours of Duties to themselves from others: therefore Solomon here doth not expressly charge or command, but minds People of their Duty in the way that was touched in the exposition, and backs it with a Reason. *I Counsel thee to keep, &c.*

4. Every Man is so proud naturally, and loves Liberty and Licentiousness so well, especially to shake off the order of Superiority and Subjection which God hath established among Men,

Men, that they have need to be tyed by Oaths and ingagements unto their Duty, for this Reason imports the necessity of such tyes, and that *Because of the Oath of God.*

5. A lawful Oath between Man and Man, tying each of them to his Duty, is *the Oath of God*, because it should be made to him, and as in his presence who will avenge the breach of it, and punish the breaker not only as false to Man but as perfidious to God; and because by these Oaths Men only ingage to what is approven by him in his word, Oaths to do things Sinful or impossible, are *Oaths of our own*: Therefore he calls this *the Oath of God.*

6. Saving Wisdom teaches Men not only to perform Duties, but to do them from right Principles and Motives, particularly Subjection to Superiours not only for fear of punishment from them or for hope of reward, or preferment by them, but mainly out of respect to God who hath injoynd the same, *Keep the Kings Commandement, and that in regard of the Oath of God.*

Ver. 3. *Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing, for he doth whatsoever pleaseth him.*

4. *Where the word of a King is, there is power: and who may say unto him, what dost thou?*

THAT the former general direction concerning due obedience to lawful Magistrats may be brought to practice, he dissuades from these Evils that are contrary thereunto, and they are two. The First is in these words, *Be not hasty to go out of his sight*, whereby is not meant simply a departing out of the presence of Magistrats, for that is often necessary, it may be done in obedience to them, and sometimes the more quickly it be done, it is the better service to them, 2 Chron. 30. 10. But it is a deserting of Duty, and *shaking off of allegiance* to them, as the expression elsewhere in Scripture signifies *Jona. 1. 3.* Neither doth he by this discharge a flying from the fury of wicked

wicked Tyrants, ſeing that is warrantable in ſome caſes. 1 *King. 19. 3. Maſh. 10. 23.* But the meaning is, that Men ſhould not out of raſh paſſion, or ſome diſcontented humour ſuddenly ſhake off Duty to Magiſtrates, and ſo turn Rebellious, or go from them to joyn with their Enemies, as *Joab* did with *Adonijah*, upon a diſcontent with *Amasa's* preferment, as is ſuppoſed.

The *Second* is, *Stand not in an evil thing*, whereby he ſuppoſes men to be ſome way ingaged in an evil courſe, and ſeems mainly to ſpeak of Diſloyalty, and offending thoſe in Authority, by deſerting Duty to them, or Acting contrary to it: And diſſwades from *Fixedneſs*, or *Contumacy* as the word ſignifies, in that courſe.

And both theſe diſſwatives he preſſes by an Argument taken from the abſolute Power, and great Terrour which often Princes and Magiſtrates have, the conſideration whereof ſhould make their Subjects the more cautious, that they do not needleſſly, or raſhly incur their Wrath and Diſpleaſure. And this reaſon he ſets forth in three Expreſſions. 1. He *doth whatſoever pleaſeth him*, Which is not to be underſtood, as if Kings were independent upon Gods Providence, or were not to give account of their Actions to any, which is proper only to God, *Job. 9. 12.* In whoſe hand their Heart, and conſequently all their Actions are, *Prov. 21. 1.* And ſo they cannot Act but what pleaſes him to order or permit: nor is it to be underſtood as if they might lawfully do any thing they pleaſe, contrary to the revealed will of God, as if they might (for examples cauſe) puniſh a Rebel, or one whom they judge ſo, without a formal Tryal by the Law, or otherwiſe than the Laws of the Land, grounded upon moral Equity preſcribe, which were contrary to *Deut. 17. 18, 19.* But he ſpeaks of what often falls out in matter of Fact, that their Power is often as great as they deſire, eſpecially in reckoning with Subjects with whom they are offended. The 2. Expreſſion is, *Where the Word of a King is, there is Power*, He means a King in the Exerciſe of his Power,

and having his Subjects at his command (otherwise a King may be in such a Case, that his Word will have no Power) if he but speak the word against a discontented person who hath rashly deserted his Duty to him, there is not wanting Power enough to reach such a man; and this is the ground of the former, that he doth what he pleases. The 3. is, *And who may say to him what dost thou.* It is not to be understood as if none might controule Kings, or Supreme Magistrates, Acting contrary to their Duty, and to the command of the Supreme Lawgiver, seeing such have been warrantably contradicted, and opposed, and had this same question in substance proposed to them, as it was by *Joab* to *David* excessively grieving for *Abalom*, 2 Sam. 19. 5. And commanding to number the People, 2 Sam. 24. 3. To *Saul* by his Subjects rescuing *Jonathan*, 1 Sam. 14. 25. And by the Priests to *Uzziah* invading their Office, 2 Chron. 26. 28. But the meaning is, that beside the Sinfulness of Disobedience to Magistrates in things Lawful, or the sinful way of refusing Obedience to them in things unlawful, it is not safe in regard of outward hazard to contradict them, men that do sit must do it upon their peril: And therefore they that would prove themselves indued with true Wisdom, should be loath to adventure rashly upon their Displeasure, that so if they must suffer from such as are so absolute in Power, and have so much Terrour, they may suffer with a Peaceable and good Conscience.

Hence Learn 1. They that handle the word of God, must not only press necessary Duties by Reasons, but if they would gain right Obedience to these Duties, they must discover to the People, and disswade them from these Evils, which are contrary to these Duties, especially these inward Distempers of Spirit which indispose them from their Duty: For, this Preacher having in the verse before, exhorted to Obedience unto Lawful Magistrates, he here dehortes from the inward root of Rebellion which is in Mens Hearts, namely their Impatience, Discontent-

contentment and Passion, which make them shake off their Allegiance and Duty to their Superiours, while he saith, *Be not hasty to go out of his Sight.*

2. However some Magistrates do carry themselves so as they are not worthy of the Presence and Countenance of good Men, *2 King. 3. 14.* Yet when men have reason to withdraw their Countenance and wonted Respect from them, they should do it without Passion, or Perturbation of Spirit, lest testifying their dislike of their Sins, they reflect upon their persons, and on their Authority which is the Ordinance of God, *Be not hasty to go out of his sight.*

3. As Christians should always have calm, and composed Spirits without Passion or Perturbation, and should manifest the same toward all men, *Tui 3. 2.* So especially toward Magistrats, and that even when they have, or apprehend themselves to have received some ground of Discontentment, our composed and meek Carriage, even when Magistrates are as they should not be, should witness our Reverence to them, as holding forth to-us some impression of the Majesty and Authority of God, *Be not hasty to go out of his sight.*

4. Though the best of men are in hazard to be overtaken through inadvertency or Passion in a wrong course, and being once engaged are ready to persist, and defend themselves in what they have done: Yet Heavenly Wisdom will teach men in that case humbly to retreat, rather than proudly to persist in any evil way: for this second dissuasive imports both the hazard of engaging, and of persisting in an evil way, and presses the receding therefrom even after engagement, as an evidence or proof of that Heavenly Wisdom formerly commended, *Stand not in an evil thing.*

5. When the Scripture speaks by way of Historical Narration of what is to be found among men, particularly Kings and great Persons, without express approving or disapproving thereof, the same is to be expounded by the scope of the place,

and other Scriptures, as for example, when the Lord foretold by *Samuel* what the King whom the people desired should prove, *1 Sam. 8. 11.* It doth not justify him to be such an one, seeing many things there spoken of him, are contrary to the Duties else where injoyed unto Kings; and so here if this expression (*He doth what he pleases*) were to be understood as if he might Lawfully do what he pleases, then *Solomon's* Idolatry, and other Iniquities had been warrantable. Therefore the meaning must be, that it falls out often thus; that when a King reckons with a Rebel or Discontented Person with whom he is displeased, *He doth whatsoever pleaseth him.*

6. The Lord permits often, and disposes so in his providence, that Kings and Supreme Magistrates should be very absolute, and have great Power, so as few do, or darr control them: And this he doth for good ends, that his Pleasure may be theirs, when they are put in a capacity to do what they please, for any opposition from men, that they may make their Power a Terrour to evil Doers, and if they imploy it otherwise, he makes good use of that also, for the increale of their Judgment, and for the trial of the Faith, and Patient of his own, who are Loyal Subjects to him: for *Solomon* speaks here of what is often found in Kings, and Supreme Magistrats, leaving the speaking of their Duty, and the limitations of their Power, to other places, *He doth whatsoever pleaseth him, where the Word of a King is there is Power, and who may say unto him what doest thou?*

7. Though the great Power and absolute Authority which Kings and Magistrates do sometimes exercise should never make their Subjects forget their Subordination to God, or do any thing contrary to his Will, *Dan. 3. 18.* Yet the consideration of it should have influence to restrain their Carnal Passions, that if they must disobey or oppose them for Conscience sake, they may do it with meekness, *1 Pet. 3. 15.* And if they must suffer, they may do it with a good Conscience, and the approbation

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of God the Supreme Magistrate: for Solomon brings their Power, and the hazard of contradicting them, as a dissuasive from rashness in dealing with them, and from persisting in any evil course, *Be not hasty, stand not in an evil thing, for he doth whatsoever he pleaseth----* and who may say unto him what dost thou?

Ver. 5. *Who so keepeth the Commandements, shall feel no evil thing: And a wise Man's Heart discerns both Time and Judgement.*

HAVING dissuaded from rash adventuring upon the Wrath of those in Authority, he doth here prescribe the safest way of walking, for eschewing trouble from them, or induring the same with a good Conscience, and that is by *keeping the Commandements*, he means mainly Gods Commandement, seing all the Lawful Commands of Magistrates are but Branches or Applications of his Commands, and by the keeping of them, he means a sincere indeavour after Obedience in the strength of the Lord, according to the Tenour of the Covenant of Grace, wherein Solomon was well instructed both immediatly by God, 2 Chron. 7. 12. And by his Father, Prov. 4. 4. Who was well acquainted therewith, Psal. 119. 6. and 71. 6. And this he presses as the prime evidence of Heavenly Wisdom, which he formerly commended; and here shews how it should be evidenced, and bears in the same by two Reasons.

The First is, That *He that keeps the Command shall feel no evil thing*, which cannot be understood as if he should thereby escape all outward trouble; seing those who are most sincere in that Study, are often put to hardest suffering; but the meaning is, that nothing which can befall him, shall be an evil to him, but rather shall be for his good. The Second Reason is, That *a Wise Mans Heart discerns both Time and Judgement*; By the *Wise Man* is meant the same who keeps the Commandement, hereby evidencing himself to be indued with Heavenly Wisdom.

dom: And this shall be his second Priviledge, he shall be able *To discern both Time and Judgement.* By *Time* he means, the fit Season and Opportunity of his Actions, especially in reference to the Commands of those in Authority, as the foregoing words make clear; He shall *Discern* when it is a *fit Season* to comply with them, and when to oppose them: And by *Discerning of Judgement*, he means the clear understanding both of the Cause of Suffering, namely what Commands of Men are to be disobeyed upon the hazard of the worst from them; and what *Commands* of theirs may with a good Conscience be obeyed: As likewise it may be understood of the manner of managing the defence of that cause in the *Season* thereof: And the Wisdom to discern all these, is only vouchsafed upon them who make Conscience of keeping the Commandements of God that are made plain to them.

Hence Learn 1. The greatness of the Power and Terror wherewith the sinful Commands of Magistrates are often backed, is ready to abate in the Hearts of the best the respect they owe to Gods Commands, and to draw them from their Obedience to him, the more terrible hazard of Disobedience to God being only seen by Faith, *Heb. 11. 1. 23.* Therefore the Wise Man having dissuaded from rash disobeying of the Commands of Superiours, by an Argument taken from the greatness of their Power, which they often exercise in an absolute way: He doth here guard against the other extreme, of obeying their sinful Commands contrary to Gods, *Who so keepeth the Commandement, (viz. of God) shall feel no evil thing.*

2. Men, so far as they have true respect to the Commands of God, can never be disloyal to any of his Vicegerents, nor disobedient to their just Commands, these being but parts of his, and Obedience to them enjoined in the Fifth Commandment: And consequently when the Commands of Superiours are agreeable to Gods, they should then be obeyed as the Commands of God, and not as *Theirs only* for fear of hazard, or hope of Advan-

Advantage from them: For Solomon that he may tye men to due obedience to Magistrates, presseth obedience to God by Reason, *Whoso keepeth the Commandement shall feel no evil thing.*

3. The true cause why Men living under Wicked Magistrates commanding things unlawful, make Shipwrack of a good Conscience, either by enslaving their Consciences to obey their sinful Commands, or by denying due respect to their person and Office, in the way of their refusing obedience to them, is this, that they want due respect to *Gods Command*, and do not believe the immunity which he hath promised, and will make good to them that are dutiful to him: for this is an Argument both to press obedience to Magistrates in things lawful, and to dissuade from rash and passionat Carriage, or disrespect toward them, even in refusing to obey their Sinful Commands, *Whoso keeps the Commandement shall feel no evil thing.*

4. Although Men who are most tender of keeping the Commands of God, may and often meet with these Hazards and Troubles which are accounted by many the greatest of Evils, such as lose of Credit, Estate, Liberty, yea, and Life it self *Heb. 11. 36.* yet nothing that can befall them for following their Duty to God, shall be an Evil to them, but on the contrary all their sufferings shall be for their good *Rom. 8. 28.* And shall increase their reward, *2 Cor. 4. 17.* by the consideration whereof they should ingage their Hearts to Duty, and patient suffering for it: For (saith he) *Whoso keeps the Commandement shall seek no Evil thing.*

5. There is great difference of Seasons in reference to suffering, or not suffering under wicked Rulers, which the Lord's People should be careful to discern. There is a time when the Corruptions of the State, and wicked Actions of Men in Authority, are only to be lamented in secret before the Lord. *Amer. 5. 13.* There are times when more is to be done, as by Supplications and other means to pacify provoked or passionat Magistrates, as *Abigail did David 1 Sam. 25. 18.* And times of
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bearing testimony openly against their ways, upon all hazards, as the Apostles did: *Act. 4. 8.* And times for Men to act contrary to them in their station, as these Eighty Worthies did to *Uzziah*, *2 Chron. 26. 18.* and the People to *Saul* in rescuing *Jonathan*. *1 Sam. 14. 45.* There is also great difference of causes, for which Men may oppose those in Authority, or submit to suffering from them, as sometimes we may quite our own right in things Civil, rather than suffer farther in maintaining of it, as *Israel* did in *Egypt*, *Exod. 5. 12.* There are other things again, which may upon no terms be yielded to Men, as matters of Religion and God's Worship, *Dan. 6. 10.* And there is a right manner of maintaining the cause of Suffering, or opposing wicked Men in the due season thereof; And both these, the *Time* and the *Judgement*, comprehending the cause, and the right manner of managing it, must be carefully discerned, and observed by those who would not feel the evil which follows upon declining to suffer, when they are called to it, or upon suffering not for a weighty cause, or not in a right manner: For that there is such difference of Times and Causes, and a necessity of observing these, imported in this, *A Wise Man's Heart* (in order to a right carriage in such a Case) *discerns both Time and Judgement.*

6. It is not Mens natural Witt, or acquired Prudence that will discover to them the seasons of doing or suffering, the causes of either, and the right manner of them, neither can particular Precepts be given for direction in all particular Circumstances relating thereunto; but it is the Wisdom from above, learned out of the Word of God by humble dependence upon his Spirit to lead in all Truth, and to give in the Hour when Men are put to it, what to speak, and consequently what to act, and when and how to act (for it is only the *Wise Man's Heart*, to wit, the Heart illuminat with the Saving Knowledge of God, and His Will, and possess'd by the Spirit of Wisdom) that *Discerns both Time and Judgement.*

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7. These who make Conscience to keep the Commands of God, in so far as they are made plain to them, shall not want direction from God in these things, which are more in the dark: So that the conscionable practice of clear Duties, is the best way to attain clearness in doubtful Cases: For the Wise Man here spoken of, whose Heart discerns Time and Judgement, is he that keeps the Commandments of God, and so is supposed to be walking conscionably according to his light; this Man in Exigencies and Straits, shall discern both Time and Judgement.

Ver. 6. *Because to every Purpose there is Time and Judgement, therefore the misery of Man is great upon him.*

7. *For he knoweth not what shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?*

HAVING shewn the excellent advantage that they have who are indued with Saving Wisdom, to wit, Ability to discern their duty, and the season thereof, he comes now to shew the sad condition of them that are destitute of it: And though the purpose may be taken in the general, yet by the scope it appears, that Solomon hath a main Eye to Mens dealing with those in Authority; *Because (saith he) to every Purpose there is Time and Judgement, therefore the misery of Man is great upon him,* it is not to be understood as if Man were therefore miserable, because there is a fit season for his Actions, and a right and a wrong in acting, for it would lessen, yea remove his Misery, if he had Wisdom to discern these; But the first part of the Sixth Verse being joined with the beginning of the Seventh, the sense appears to be this, *Because there is a Time and Judgement for every Purpose, and the natural Man cannot discern either of them, therefore his Misery is great: By misjudging of Causes, and mistimeing of his Purposes and Actions, he runs himself into many Inconveniencies: And this*

ignorance, which is the cause of his Misery, he sets forth in two Expressions.

The First is, That *Man knows not what shall be*, which is not to be understood, as if the ignorance of future Events simply, were the cause of Mans Misery, for then the Man that hath the greatest measure of Saving Knowledge, might be equally miserable with them that want it, seeing it is God's Prerogative to know absolutely what shall be, *Isa. 46. 9, 10.* But this, that *Man knows not what shall be*, may be understood 1. Of his ignorance of his Duty, at if the Words were rendered, He knows not what *should be*, to wit, what he should do: For the *Hebrews* express duty after this manner in the future time, and so his ignorance of his duty, and the right manner of going about it, is the cause of his Misery. And we may be confirmed that this may be the sense, because the following Expression speaks of the Time, which he joins before with Judgment. Or 2. The meaning may be, That the Man destitute of Saving Knowledge, is not only ignorant of future Events, but likewise of all these grounds of Consolation, that might carry him through them, be what they will; and therefore his Misery is great upon him. And 3. It may be taken thus, He knows not what shall be, even so far as may be known by that Saving Wisdom which he is commending, particularly by the light of the Word and Spirit of God, and therefore his Misery must be great upon him.

For the other Expression, *Who can tell him when it shall be?* It hath the force of a Negation, None can tell him, or none can make him capable, seeing God hath not taught him the timing of his Actions, a right carriage in Straits and Exigencies, and how he may have true Comfort whatever future Events be.

Doct. 1. There is not only a Right and a Wrong in Mens Actions, and a season for their Acting, which they should labour to understand, but the same is also to be observed in re-
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ference to Mens Purposes, and Resolutions concerning these: So that they should not so much as suffer their Hearts to resolve upon, or encline to any courses, till first they have consulted the Word of God as their Directory, *Pf. 19. 7.* and implored God's Direction; who being acknowledged in all our ways, promiseth to direct our paths, *Prov. 3. 6.* that they may know whether the thing they resolve upon be approved, and what is the right manner of doing of it, which is the thing he calls *Judgement* here, and what is the fittest season and opportunity for the doing thereof, which is the *Time* here spoken of: For having said, *A Wise Mans Heart discerns both time and Judgement*, in shewing the consequence of not discerning these, he applies it to Mens purposes, or their *Resolution* and *Will* (as the Word signifies) *Because to every Purpose there is a Time and Judgement.*

1. The want of understanding of the Mind of God in His Word, concerning our Duty, and the due season thereof, which is to be had by the help of his Spirit, who leads His People in all Truth, not only makes Men misjudge of things, and take right for wrong, even in their ordinary and civil Affairs, mistake the right manner of going about what may be right in it self, mistime all their Actions, and so bring much guilt upon themselves; but likewise it makes them very miserable, while they rashly engage themselves in sinful Courses, neglect necessary Duties, or do them in a wrong manner, or not in their own season; and so provoke God to blast their Undertakings, and render what they do unfavoury to others; All which might have been prevented by consulting His Word, and seeking the conduct of His Spirit: For this Word translated *Misery*, signifies both Guilt and Misery, or Punishment. *Because to every Purpose there is Time and Judgement* (which Men labour not to discern) *therefore the misery of Man is great upon him.*

3. The way to make Men fall in love with the study of Saving Knowledge, is to represent to them the Misery and sad Con-

sequences that Men destitute of it do bring upon themselves. For it being his scope to commend Saving Wisdom, he here points out the woful Consequences of the want of it, *Because every Purpose there is Time and Judgement, the misery of Man is great upon him, for he knows not, &c.*

4. Though both those that are indued with Saving Knowledge, and those that are destitute of it, be equally ignorant of many future Events; yet herein is a clear difference between them, that the one knows neither his Duty, nor the right manner of going about it: The other doth in some measure know both, as Solomon asserted in the close of the former Verse. For that which he called Judgements before, he calls now, *that which shall be* (which according to the Hebrew Dialect, is put for that which *should be*) and makes the ignorance of this peculiar to the Man destitute of Saving Knowledge, as the cause of much Misery upon him. *The misery of Man is great upon him, for he knows not what shall be.*

5. It is the misery of Man void of Saving Knowledge, that being ignorant of *what shall be*, he hath nothing to give him true Comfort against *what may be*, and against what he is apt to apprehend shall be, and so must vex himself with his own Apprehensions: And it is the comfortable Priviledge and Happiness of the Man indued with Saving Wisdom, that though he be ignorant of future Events, yet he doth in some measure know what is his Duty under, and what is his futable Consolation against the worst that can fall out: For it is here set down as the cause of much Misery peculiar to the Man destitute of Saving Knowledge, that *He knows not what shall be*, which cannot be taken simply for his ignorance of future Events, seeing the Godly Man is ignorant of these, but that he knows not what is his Duty, and that he is so ignorant of what shall be, as that he hath no futable Comfort against what may be, and what he apprehends shall fall out, *His misery is great upon him, for he knows not what shall be.*

6. The Man that is not taught of God, and makes not Saving Knowledge from the Word and Spirit of God, his study, is one that no Man can inform, all the Men in the World are to him, as if they were ignorant as himself: For this last Question, *Who can tell him when it shall be?* is not as if there were none that could inform him of Times and Seasons, so far as is fit for him to know, for there are such to be found; but because he himself is void of Saving Knowledge, and doth not imploy Christ to open his blind Eyes, and because he cannot receive instruction from any; therefore he speaks of him, as if there were none to tell him that which might prevent his Misery, *And who can tell him when it shall be?*

Ver. 8. *There is no Man that hath power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit; neither hath he power in the day of Death: and there is no discharge in that war, neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.*

THE Preacher giveth here a farther Argument for the study of Heavenly Wisdom, and proveth the Misery of them that are destitute of it; The Argument is taken from the necessity of the Death of all Men; which though it be true of both good and bad, yet it is here spoken of as a peculiar Misery upon those that are destitute of saving knowledge, they being both unwilling to dy, and unprepared for Death, and having nothing to comfort them against it, as the Godly have. The words may be looked upon as one special instance of these Events spoken off in the words immediately preceeding, whereof no Man can know the time, and may be taken with a special Reference to the foregoing purpose, as an Argument to dissuade Men from Rashness in hazarding themselves under the stroke of humane Justice from Magistrates, and to move them for that end to keep themselves within the bounds of their Duty toward them, seeing as he hath shewn before, they have

have power to reach Men easily that provoke them, and being once apprehended, and Sentence past against them *there is no power in them to retain their Life* :

But it seems most agreeable the Scope, to take the words more largely as an Argument to evidence Heavenly Wisdom, by timeous preparing for Death; because of the necessity of it, and this he sets forth in three Expressions. The First, *that man hath no power over the Spirit to retain it*, may be understood of mans Impotency to retain his Soul or Breath as the word *Spirit* is in the Original) which is often held out in Scripture by this name. *Jam* 2. 22. And that relating to the moment when Gods time is come to call for it, no Man then hath power to keep it longer in the Prison, as the word *Retain* signifies: The Second, *Neither hath he power in the day of Death*, may be understood of Mans Inability about the time of his Death not only to resist Death, but to do any necessary Duty, he hath ordinarily no power for any Action toward that time. The meaning of the Third, *There is no Discharge in that War*, is, that Man can Discharge no Weapons to weaken the force of Death, for the word *Discharge* signifies Emission, or sending forth as it is used *Pf* 78. 49. as Men casts Darts, or discharge Musquets, or the like Engines of War, they have no Arrows to shoot at Death: Or there is no *Dismission* of this charge no forelose, as the common word is, to shift this Combate which Men must have with Death; Thus he sets out the necessity of it, and Mens Impotency to shift it. And because wicked Men who by many sinful shifts put by hazards, yea Death at self for a time, which as they think would have come, if they had not followed these Courses, do think themselves in a manner in Covenant with Death, that it must spare them, while the Godly perisheth in his uprightness, as *Solomons* expression is before, therefore that he may terrify and reclaim such, he doth assure all, whether Magistrats or Subjects, that none of their wicked Courses wherein they are restless, and whereunto they

they have wedded themselves, shall be able to prevent their Death or *prolong their Life*: as the last words of the verse signify.

Doct. 1. All the Prudence, Power, and Policy of Men, all the Creature Comforts, the Cordials, and preservatives of Life, that Men may provide and use, cannot keep in the Immortal Soul in the Body a moment longer then Gods time is come to call for it: Man hath some power over his Spirit to turn it, while his Life lasts, to restrain it from many things he lets it out upon, and to put it upon many better things, but he hath no power to keep it beyond the Moment fixed by the Lord for taking his Spirit into his hand, to dispose of it eternally as he pleases: For, saith he, *no Man hath power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit.*

2. Man should so exercise his witt in the study of Reconciliation with God, while he hath any power over the Motions of his own Spirit, and should so spend his affections, the desires and delights of his Soul, upon things of a spiritual and eternal concernment, for the Glory of God, and the good of his own Soul, that he may be every Moment ready to let his Spirit go willingly, and to resign it into the hands of the Father of Spirits who gave it, considering that when Gods appointed time of calling for it, comes, he will have *no Power* over it to *Retain* it: for this is an Argument for the study of Heavenly Wisdom, and respect to Gods commands, *Man hath no Power over the Spirit to retain it.*

3. However Men of great natural Spirits, especially such as are transported with the desire of esteem for magnanimity, and Courage, may seem to defy Death, and not to fear it, while they are not come to Combat with it, yet so terrible is it to all that have not made their Peace with God, and so made sure to themselves a better Life, that when it draws near they will have strong desires to *Retain* their Spirits a while longer, and to have a *Discharge* from the Combat with Death, they having
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nothing to comfort and strengthen them against the King of Terrours, and the fear of the second Death, which is at the back of the first: for this is spoken to shake men out of their security, who neglect the study of Heavenly Wisdom, and preparation for Death, *no Man hath power over the Spirit, to retain the Spirit, neither is there any discharge in that War.*

4. It is the great Misery of wicked Men, to be peremptorily called to render their Spirits, and utterly unwilling to part with them; to be called to Combat with the King of Terrours, and to have neither Courage nor Comfort in entering the the Lists with him; and this is the case of all who are destitute of saving Wisdom, the consideration whereof should incite Men to study Reconciliation with God, and an Holy Walk, which breeds Willingness to Dy, and Comfort in Death. For as a proof of Mans Misery spoken of before, this is brought in, *no Man hath Power to retain the Spirit*, it supposes Man very desirous to *Retain* it even when he must part with it.

5. Mens Spirits that are now Rebellious against God, and in a continual motion contrary to his revealed Will, must when Death comes move at his Command, they must flit out of the Body, and list themselves before the Judge to be at his disposal; the consideration whereof should deter Men from their sinful Courses: For *no man hath Power over the Spirit, to retain the Spirit.*

6. While Men have natural strength and vigour, they should spend the same in these Exercises, the remembrance whereof may comfort them in Death, for when Death draws neer, Man becomes impotent not only to resist Death, but to prepare for it, not only hath he no power to prosecute his Lusts farther, but no power for these spiritual Exercises, which he puts off to the Day of his Death, for Solomon gives this as an Argument for the study of Heavenly Wisdom, *neither hath he Power in the day of Death.*

7. As every Man will have a sore Conflict, and an hot Battel
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with Death, so there is no Man with never so much Power or Policy, not the greatest on Earth, who can have a *Discharge* or *Exemption* from engaging in the Combat with it: Therefore Men had need to get the *Breast plate of Faith*, and for an *Helmet*, the *hope of Salvation*, and to study a wise carriage in an evil World, especially when they have to do with Wicked men in Power and Authority, lest by their miscarriage they engage themselves needlessly in that War: For, *there is no Discharge in that War.*

8. Mortal men can hardly be brought to have serious thoughts of the necessity of Death, and the impossibility of shifting the Combat with it, they live as if they could *Retain* their Spirits for ever, and forget to take their Armour to them, as if they were never to fight with the *King of Terrors*: Therefore the necessity of it, and impossibility of escaping it is here set forth by so many expressions, *No Man hath power over the Spirit to retain the Spirit, no man hath power in the day of Death, neither is there any Discharge in that War.*

9. When wicked Men have had success in their sinful Courses, so far as by them to escape temporal hazards for a time, they do then go on as confidently in them, as if they would always deliver them, as is imported in this threatening which contradicts Mens ordinary apprehension, *neither shall Wickedness deliver those that are given to it.*

10. Whatever be mens apprehensions of safety by their sinful Courses, they shall be so far from delivering them at last, that they shall bring total, and terrible destruction upon them: For such sparing expressions in Scripture spoken against wicked Men, import much more than is express, even the contrary affirmative in the Superlative degree, *neither shall Wickedness deliver those that are given to it.* importing no less than that it shall bring *Utter Destruction*, from which there shall be no escaping to all Eternity.

11. However all unregenerate Men, rise not to a like height
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of Wickedness, yet all of them are restless in committing of the same, *they cannot Sleep unless they do Mischief*, or provoke others so to do, as the word *Wickedness* signifies, they are expert in Sin, and wedded to their Lusts, as if they had made a *Marriage Covenant* with them, as the words Translated *that are given to it*, signifie, *Wickedness shall not deliver those that are given to it*.

12. Though any degree of Wickedness continued in, will bring Destruction upon Men, yet of all Sinners there are least hopes of the Salvation of them who are become Restless, and unwearied in Sinning, and so pour out their affections upon their Lusts as if they were wedded to them, for so are the words in the Original, *Wickedness* (or Turbulency and Restlessness in Sin) *shall not deliver them that are given, or have Wedded, or married themselves unto it*.

Ver. 9. *All this have I seen and applied my heart to every work that is done under the Sun: there is a time wherein one man Rules over another to his own hurt.*

HERE Solomon doth First confirm his former Doctrine from his own Experience, that he had Seen all that he saith, partly by his own Observation, and partly by the Information of the Lords Spirit representing to his mind as in a Glass (that he might represent the same to the Church) the misery of them that want that Wisdom which is from above, and the sweet Advantages of them that have it, formerly mentioned.

Next, He commends his Experience from the great pains he took in studying the Lords Dispensations, he *applied his heart*, his understanding and Affections were taken up, how to profit in this study, and the Book he read upon, was a very large Volume *all the works under the Sun*, whereby he means especially all the Dispensations of Gods Providence, for the several kinds of them, and so far as humane understanding, elevated
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and illuminated as his was, might reach them: For though he was a great Student of the Works of Creation or nature, 1 King. 4. 33. yet he speaks here mainly of the Works of Gods Providence, or the carriage and issue of humane Affairs, as these are under the dominion of Providence, seeing most of the instances he gives in this Book are of that nature.

Thirdly, He enters upon the second part of the Chapter, to prove the Vanity of Worldly greatness, and doth particularly confirm what he spake concerning the misery of them that are void of Saving Knowledge, and that *Wickedness will not deliver them that are given to it*, in the former words, by giving an instance in his own Observation of that Dispensation which the Godly are most apt to stumble at, to wit, the Advancement of Wicked men to greatness and power in the World; And proves them miserable notwithstanding, that the hearts of the Godly may be guarded against envying of them, while he saith, *one Man Ruler over another to his Hurt*, he means, their abuse of of their power and greatness draws on often temporal, and always (if they Repent not) Eternal misery upon them.

Beside what hath been observed before from his commending his Doctrine from his own Experience, and from his pains in acquiring the knowledge thereof. Learn. 1. Dispensations are never so dark, but spiritual Discerners may see the Blessedness of the Godly and the misery of the Wicked, even when they are saddest to the Godly, and seem most favourable to the Wicked, they that have the Heavenly Wisdom may see the Godly feeling no evil thing, and the Wicked injoying their Prosperity *to their Hurt*. For the Scope of the words before and after, implies the time here spoken of to be very sad, and yet *Solomon* saith, he saw these sweet effects of Heavenly Wisdom, and the woful case of them that want it, which are formerly mentioned, *All this have I Seen*.

2. Even those who have attained to the greatest measure of the Knowledge of God and His Ways, are not exempted from

stretching their Wit and strength to the outmost for growth and progress therein, that which is to be known of God in any of His Dispensations, being a Depth that none can sound: For even Solomon, who had before an extraordinary measure of Wisdom, saith *I applied my Heart to every work.*

3. They that would judge aright of any one of the Lord's Dispensations, must be careful Students of them all, they must not slight any work of his, because all (though they be many to us) make up but one intire Work in God's Hand, and every part of that work, is a commentary clearing the nature and use of the whole, and God's intent therein: Therefore did Solomon apply his Heart to every work under the Sun.

4. As the Lord doth for wise Ends permit wicked Men to come to Authority over others in the World, so hath He the time when they shall come to it fixed, and how long they shall have it: For it is clear by the consequence of this Ruling, to the person who hath it, that he speaks of wicked Men, and the word *Time* signifies a set and fixed season, wherein *One Man rules over another.*

5. As wicked Mens power tends always to the hurt of these over whom they are set, Eccl. 10. 16. So it is especially for *their own hurt*, giving them fairer opportunity to shew the latent wickedness of their Heart than they had before, whereby they procure to themselves Temporal and Eternal Wrath from the Lord. *There is a time when one Man rules over another to his own hurt.*

6. This Hurt which is incident to men of Place and Power in the World, should wean mens Hearts from affecting worldly Greatness, as any part of their Happiness: For we may look upon this as a proof of the Vanity of such Greatness, that it is often found *One Man rules over another to his own hurt.*

Ver. 10. *And so I saw the Wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the Holy, and they were forgotten in the City where they had so done: thus is also Vanity.*

HE doth farther illustrat the Misery of Men void of saving Knowledge, how great soever they may be in the World. And this he doth for the Comfort of the Godly who are oppress'd by them. There are three things wherein such Men place much of their Happines, namely in an Honourable *Burial* when they are Dead, a great *Esteem* among Men while they live, and in the preservation of their *Memory* after they are Dead.

As for the *First*, *Solomon* saith, he observed them to have it, *I saw the Wicked Buried*, it seems he means a sumptuous and Honourable Burial like the Rich Mans, *Luk. 16. 22.* even such an one as so great a Man as himself hath countenanced.

For the *Second* they may have that also, they may *Come and go from the place of the Holy*. By the place of the Holy may be safely understood both the place of publick *Judicature*, where the Holy God is said to stand, and Judge, *Pf. 82. 1.* And likewise the place of publick Religious *Worship*, where the same Holy One is in a special way present, and his Saints, or Holy Ones meet together for his service *Isa. 64. 11.* By *Coming and Going* he means their frequenting, and conversing in both these places mainly for upholding their *Credit* and Worldly interest, and it is probable this expression, the place of the Holy, is so framed as may comprehend both these, because meer Politicians, and corrupt States-men doe ordinarily make both Justice and Religion a Cloak for their Wickedness.

And for the *Third*, the *Esteem* of themselves which they desired should be kept up after they were gone, he denies them to have gotten that, as to his Observation, they were *Forgotten* among Men, nor as if it were of it self a Misery to be forgotten among the most part of Men, seeing it is incident to the Best *Eccles. 9. 15.* But he speaks of it as a proof their Misery, because they

they place a great part of their Happines in perpetuating their *Memory*, as is clear from *Psal* 49 11. and so the mentioning of their being *Forgotten* may serve to make them see the Vanity of their temper. And this affectation of Worldly greatness and a name among Men which hath this consequent, and all the pains Men take to obtain the same, he pronounces to be *Vanity*, in the close of the verse, *this is Vanity* saith he, which cannot be applyed to their being *Forgotten*, seeing it is clear, he speaks of such as can leave nothing behind them Savoury, or worthy to be remembered.

Hence Learn. 1. The Lord may long spare Wicked men in their Sinful Courses, and may not only along their Life, heap upon them more eminent proofs of common favour, than upon the Godly *Psal* 73 5. But likewise may suffer that respect to be shewn to their Bodies, while their Souls are in the Pit, which is sometimes denied to the Bodies of his dearest Saints *Psal* 79 2. For, (saith he) *I saw the Wicked Buried*.

2. This is the best that can be said of many Wicked men after their Death, that they are now put under the Earth, the things whereof they sought for their Happines; and this may put Water in their Wine, to consider that within a little time, it shall be truly said of every one of them; and may comfort the Godly against Oppression, to consider they may survive their Oppressours, and see that which Solomon saith he saw, *the Wicked Buried*.

3. Places of Judgement, and Courts of Justice, are *Places of the Holy*, where the Holy God is in a special way present, observing mens carriage there *Psal* 82. 1. who therefore should have Holy Ends before them in all their Actings, the Glory of God, and the promoting of Equity and Piety among men. 2. *Chron* 19. 6. For seeing he is speaking of Magistrates all along, we may safely conceive that places of Judgement are here understood, by *the Place of the Holy*.

4. Wicked men in power may attend very carefully their
Judge.

Judgement seats, as if they had given themselves away to be Patrons and Administrators of Equity among men, while they are but thereby promoting, and securing their own Worldly interest, and often making the pretence of Administration of Justice, a Cloak to cover their Wickedness: For He speaks of the Wicked man, as if his Life had been spent in the Administration of Justice, and attending the places where the same is given forth, *I saw the wicked Buried who had come and gone from the place of the Holy.*

5. As the places of publick Worship, are the Lords prime Residence on Earth, where he doth in a special manner dwell among his People and meet with them, and therefore should be in a Holy manner frequented, seeing he will be sanctified in all that draw neer unto him: So Wicked men may much frequent these places and opportunities, partly from a conceit of gratifying and pleasing God by their so doing. *Luk. 18, 10.* Imagining that by their performances of that sort, they have a Dispensation for their other Impieties. *Prov. 7. 14.* And partly that they may be the less suspected for that Wickedness which they closely intend. *2 Sam. 15. 7.* and may be the more intimat with the Godly, whom they purpose to undermine, *Psal. 55. 14.* For this *Coming and going*, may be also understood of the frequenting the Places of the Lords Holy Ordinances, *I saw the Wicked who had Come and Gone from the place of the Holy.*

6. Though Hypocrites, who seek no more but a Name among Men, may gain somewhat of it along their Life, *Mat. 6. 16.* Yet the Lord often makes their Name to rot after they are gone, seeing they have left nothing behind them, worthy to be remembred, for after the wicked man is Buried, who *Had come and gone from the Place of the Holy*, he is forgotten in the City where he had so done.

7. The Lord doth sometimes make his oppressed People live to see their powerful and proud Oppressours Buried, and all

all their Hypocrisie and Tyanny Buried, with them, and giveth to his People such peace and refreshment by their removal, that they soon forget all their former sufferings by them: For doubtless this Wicked man hath been a vexation to the Godly in the City where he dwelt, and yet now he is *Buried, and Forgotten in the City where he had so done.*

8. It is Vanity in men to seek no higher Happiness than a name among Men while they live, and some Honourable Burial, and Remembrance after they are Dead: For this is it *Solomon* here passes sentence upon, *this also is Vanity.*

Ver. 11. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the Sons of Aden is fully set in them to do Evil.*

HERE *Solomon* gives a Reason why Wicked Men, especially prosperous Rulers are so bent upon their sinful Courses, namely, because the Sentence or threatening against them, which is published in the *Scripture* (for the Word *Sentence* signifies a Sentence published) is not presently after their committing of Sin, executed against them, therefore they imagine it shall be so always, that God is like themselves and speaks but to terrifie them, and so give up their hearts to commit Wickedness with boldness and full delight.

From this Learn. 1. There is a sentence past against every Sin and Sinner, It is past in Gods Eternal Counsel. *Mic. 2. 3.* and published in his word where it is Registrat, and was also published to the People by them that did Registrat it *Gen. 2. 17. Gal. 3. 10.* And oftentimes the same is past in the Conscience of Wicked men when they commit Wickedness, who cannot but apply these Sentences to themselves as their due *Rom. 2. 15.* And these Sentences can no ways be repealed, but by flying to Christ, and being interested in his ransom and satisfaction: For he supposes a Sentence past and promulgat, while he saith, *Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not speedily executed.*

3. The

2. The Lord doth not immediatly upon Mens committing of Wickedness, execut his just Sentences upon them, as justly he might, but delays the same, that he may lead them by his long suffering to Repentance *Rom. 2. 4.* that they may think of his Majesty as desirous of their amendement, *2 Pet. 3. 9.* And that the Equity of his proceeding may be the more clear, when at last he doth execut, *Pf. 51. 4.* *Therefore Sentence against an Evil Work is not Speedily execut.*

3. Men void of saving Grace and the fear of the Lord, can not but abuse his patience and long suffering, quite contrary to the intent thereof, by mocking his threatnings as if they should never be execut, *Isa. 5. 19. Jer. 5. 12.* And intertaining thoughts of him, as if he were like themselves in forgetting, or changing his mind *Pf. 50. 21.* And so going on boldly in Sin *without all fear*, as the last words of the verse may be rendred, *Because Sentence against an evil Work is not Speedily execut, the hearts of the Children of Men are fully set,* (or are bold) *in them to do Evil:*

4. There is no doubt but the Sentence against all the Wicked continuing in their Wickednes shall be execut. Though it be not Speedily, it shall be certainly, and the longer it be delayed, the nearer the Execution of it is, and the more terrible shall it be when it comes, for he doth import the Certainty of the Execution, while he only concedes, it is not Speedily Execut.

5. What ever difference be among Men, from their natural temper, Education, or other things of that sort, yet this is common to all whom Gods powerful Grace hath not changed, that the longer he prolong his patience and indulgence toward them, they go on in their Sins the more presumptuously, they are the more bent upon their wicked Courses: For he describes the Disposition of every natural Man, while he saith, *The Hearts of the Children of Men are fully set in them to do Evil.*

6. The Lord doth not only take notice of, and will accordingly punish at last, Men for their sinful Actions, but also for the

the Benefit of delight and Eagerness they had in Sinning, yet and for their very inclination to these Sins, which they had never power nor opportunity to Act, *Psalm 21. 11. 12.* For describing the Disposition of such, he supposes that God will at last execute Sentence upon them, because *their Hearts are fully set in them to do Evil.*

7. It is the proper mark of an unregenerate Man, void of Saving Knowledge and Grace, to have his Heart fully set in him without reluctancy, or remorse, to do Evil. The regenerate have another principle within them, opposing their Sinful Motions, *Gal. 5. 17.* Checking and wounding them, and bringing them to remorse for Sin, *Rom. 7. 24.* For it is the unregenerate, whose temper he here describes, *The Hearts of the Children of Men are fully set in them to do Evil.*

Vcr. 12. Though a Sinner do Evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged; yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God; which fear before him.

13. But it shall not be well with the Wicked; neither shall he prolong his days which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God.

HE Labours here to terrify such Wicked Men as are long spared in their Sins, and to guard and comfort the Hearts of the Godly, who are apt to stumble at their being spared, and their own sufferings from them.

And for this end, He first supposes two things, which make Wicked Men dream of immunity from Judgement. 1. Their multiplying of their Transgressions, which he expresses by putting a definite number for an indefinite, and such a number as points at the multitude of them, and may signify that God hath them all numbered exactly, how many so ever they be, 2. He supposes that while they are multiplying their Transgressions, they have their Day, and likewise many other outward

favours

favours multiplied upon them: For the Original of this second clause is no more but that it be *Prolonged*, or *Multiplied* to him, which may comprehend both his Life, and other Comforts.

And *Next*, before he denounce or assert the certainty of approaching Judgement, upon such Wicked Men, he doth as it were hasten forth a word of Comfort to the Godly, apt to be discouraged by the frequent oppressions, and multiplied Injuries of oppressing Persecutors which are here supposed: And this he propounds with much confidence and certainty, *Surely I know it shall be well with them*, whom he describes from that divine quality which is stamped upon their Heart, a Holy filial fear of offending God, which makes them obnoxious to hard sufferings from Men: And the sincerity of this fear is set out by the Object of it, *they Fear before him*, the words in the Original are, that fear *before his face*, importing that they have their eye upon the *Terrour* and *Goodness* of God, which two properties of his are mainly signified by his *Face* in Scripture *Psal. 34. 15. 16.* more than upon all the *Terrour* of flesh.

And *Thirdly*, He denunceth Judgement against the Wicked: with all importing it to be so great, that positive termes cannot be had to set it out, therefore he expresses it. 1. In general negatively, *it shall not be well with him*, and next more particularly, *he shall not prolong his Days*: He supposed him before to prolong his Days, and here threatens he shall not: both agree, he may have many Days, comparing him with others, even with the Godly, whom he may cut off, and hasten to their Happiness, and yet he shall neither prolong his Days to that length which he desires, which would be for ever in this Life, nor shall he prolong them to Eternity of Blessedness, being made victorious over Death, as this expression of *Prolonging the Days* imports sometimes in Scripture *Isai. 53. 10.*

Fourthly, He describes the Wicked Mans Life, his Days are *but a Shadow*, not so much for the shortness of them, being

compared with Eternity, in which sense the Godlies Days also are as a Shadow, as in regard he hath nothing of that substantial Life of Communion with God, which the Godly Man hath, and that his Life, in regard of any Comfort, totally perishes, and is cut off as a *Shadow*, when the Sun of Gods favourable Dispensations sets upon him at his Death, or when Judgements come upon him in this Life.

And lastly, He sets down the cause of the Wicked Mans Judgement, which is also the fountain of all other Sins, and that is, the want of the fear of God.

Hence Learn. 1. Men that give up their Hearts to commit Wickedness with full bensel of purpose and delight, are justly given up of God to become unwearied in the frequent commission thereof: For he did formerly describe the disposition of all unregenerat Men, that their Hearts are fully set in them to do Evil, and here he describes their common Practice in this supposition, that *they do Evil an Hundred times.*

2. While Men are multiplying their provocations, the Lord may in much displeasure to them, draw out their Life in length and multiply their outward Comforts, which they do abuse, and turn in fewel to their Lusts: For the same whom he supposes to do Evil an Hundred times, he supposes also to have his Days, or any other outward and common favours Prolonged, or multiplied to him, and his Days (or and it) be Prolonged.

3. While Wicked Men are spared and prosperous in their Sins, grievous Temptations are ready to assault the Hearts of the Godly, amounting to no less than the questioning of a reward for Godliness at all, seeing divine Dispensations seem to say that the Lord respects Ungodly Men by heaping favours on them, and flights them that are better: For to prevent the prevalency of such a temptation, Solomon (before he shew what shall become of the Wicked) assures the Godly of the contrary of what they are ready to apprehend, *Surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God.*

4. Although the Lords forbearance of Wicked Men while they are multiplying Transgressions against him, cannot but occasion much inward Grief of Heart to the Godly, *Psal. 119 158.* And doth often occasion much outward Trouble to them from the Wicked *Psal. 12, 8.* yet neither of these can either marr or diminish the Happines of the truly Godly: For (saith he) *though a Sinner do Evil an Hundred times &c. yet it shall be well with them that fear God.*

5. The Lord in denouncing Judgments against Wicked Men, hath a speciale eye to the comfort of the Godly, they are so neer his Heart, that even as it were in the midst of his expressing his displeasure against the Wicked, he reacheth forth Comfort to them, and in a manner delays it not till he end his speech to the Wicked, as here may be seen, *Though a Sinner do Evil an Hundred times, and his Days be prolonged* (before he perfect this speech concerning the Wicked, he must comfort the Godly) *yet shall it be well with them that fear God.*

6. It is not easie to make the Hearts of poor Believers, especially when they are under Oppressions and multiplied injuries from the World, to rest upon the bare word of Gods promise; and comfort themselves concerning the sweet issue of their pains and the Gracious Reward of their wel-doing, there being so much of a heart of Unbelief, in the best: Therefore doth the Spirit of the Lord teach the Wise Man, in propounding their Consolation, to speak with a kind of Asseveration, and with much confidence and certainty to beget the same in their Hearts, *Surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God.*

7. It is not a bare conjecture, or meer probability that the Godly have of their future Happines, and the Lords making out of his promises to them, but it is a certainty, and a firm perswasion wrought in their Hearts by the Spirit of God, making them to rest confidently upon his faithful word, and helping them to believe, by giving them sometimes the first Fruits thereof in hand: For *Salomon* speaks what he would teach all
Men

Men that fear of God to speak with application to themselves, else they cannot have that strong Consolation, which is suitable to the case they are supposed to be in here, *Surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God.*

8. Only these who have such an Holy fear of offending God flowing from the believing Consideration of his Sovereignty and greatness, *Jer. 10. 7.* his goodness manifested to them *Hos. 3. 5.* And his proneness to pardon their Sins *Psal. 130. 4.* and such other perfections of his, as makes them rather adventure upon the worst that the greatest of Men can do, than upon Gods displeasure, by shewing Trouble from them, Only those (I say) may perswade themselves, that it shall *be well with them*, and only those can Comfort themselves in such a perswasion against all their Sufferings: For, to such only is this consolation held forth, *it shall be well with them that fear God,*

9. The true fear of God is mainly known by the Souls setting it self *before the Face* of the Lord, apprehending him a *Present God* and witness of all its Actions, doing all as in his sight; they fear God indeed who so apprehend his greatness and Terror, as not to flee from him; his goodness so as to draw near him; and so set themselves still as in his Countenance: For so the *Fear of God* is here explained, that it is a *fear before him*, or (as the word is in the Original) *a Fear before his Face.*

10. Proper and positive Language is wanting to express how ill it shall go with Wicked Men, when the Lords patience toward them is expired, and wrath proportionable to their Sins is measuring out unto all Eternity. Therefore doth the Spirit of God here and elsewhere. *Isai. 3. 11.* express the punishment of the Wicked *Negatively*, which imports more positive Torment and wrath than words can be found to express. *But it shall not be well with the Wicked.*

11. How long soever the Days of Wicked Men may be prolonged, even beyond the Dayes of many Godly, who are taken away from the Evil to come, yet shall they never be drawn

drawn out to that length which they desire or imagine, that would indeed be an Eternity of time, so that in this respect they never live out half their Days. *Psal. 55. 23.* For (saith he) *Neither shall his days be prolonged.*

12. Though for the shortness and frailty of this temporal Life, the Days or Life of both Godly and Wicked be but as a *Shadow*, in comparison of that substantial Eternal Life which is afterward, yet the Days and Life of the Wicked being compared with that substantial and solid Life of communion with God, which the Godly have begun here, and continued thro' all Eternity, are but as the *Shadow* of a Life and Days: For so are they here called, *his Days which are as a shadow.*

13. As the want of that Filial or Sonly Fear of the Lord which was described (*Doct. 8*) is the cause of all the other Sins of Wicked Men, so is it also a clear evidence of Eternal wo and Misery to come upon them, though they be for the present spared, and prospering in their Sins. For so is it here set down as the cause of Judgement certainly coming upon them, *Because they fear not God.*

Ver. 14. *There is a Vanity which is done upon the earth, that there be just men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the Wicked: again there be wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the Righteous: I said that this also is Vanity.*

15. *Then I commended Mirth, because a man hath no bitter thing under the Sun, than to eat and drink and be merry: for that shall abide with him of his Labour, the days of his life, which God giveth him under the Sun.*

That the former Consolation may be the sweeter to the Godly under their sufferings from Wicked Men, in prosperity, He doth *First*, repeat the ground of their discouragement, to wit, that the Godly are dealt with for their outward lot,

as if they were the worst Men in the World: and on the contrary, Dispensations are favourable to the worst of Men as if they were the best Servants that God had in the World. And he saith it *Happens* thus, not as if it fell out without the foreknowledge, or predetermination and providence of God, but that it is ordinarily so, and that Men generally see not the Reason of it: For the word in the Original is, it *Touches*, or *Hits* so upon the Wicked and the Just.

Next, He passes Sentence upon this, both in the beginning and close of the verse, *there is a Vanity* (saith he) and again *this is Vanity*, which is not to be understood as if he had censured the Wise and Righteous Providence of God in permitting and ordering things so to fall forth. But it is *Vanity* in two Respects. 1. In so far as it is the fruit of Mens Corruption who are instruments in it, especially Wicked Men in Authority, whom he mainly eyes all along this Chapter, it flows from, and doth evidence the Vanity of their minds, their Corrupt, and Wicked Humours, which are called by this name *Vanity* in Scripture, that they do prefer and reward Wicked Men, as if they were Righteous, and oppress and bear down the Godly, as if they were the worst of Men, this is their *Vanity*. 2. It is *Vanity*, in so far as it proves the emptiness, or insufficiency of any earthly condition for giving Man true contentment, and Happiness, seeing things are necessarily and wisely ordered so to fall forth upon the Earth, Happiness cannot be had in it.

Thirdly, He directs to one particular remedy of that discouragement which readily is occasioned by the sight of these Dispensations. Then saith he, *I commended Mirth*, not carnal Mirth, which Men have in giving up themselves to sensual pleasures, as is clear by considering the ground whereupon he presses this same sort of Mirth in the following Chapter ver. 7, to wit, Gods acceptance of Mens works, and therefore it must be a spiritual Rejoicing in God, as the effect of Mens Faith, and went the Blessed Issue of their Troubles, formerly spoken of, and

and it is the same with that frame of Spirit which the primitive Christians had in a suffering time, while they are said to eat their Meat with Gladness and singleness of Heart, *Act. 2. 46.*

And this he doth in the fourth place commend by two Reasons. 1. Because there is *nothing better on Earth* for a Man, than to study cheerful submission to God, in the use of such Creature Comforts as he allows upon him, what ever the measure of them be, and whatever the Dispensations of God be with him, it is his best, *under the Sun.* to rejoice in God, and to stir up his heart by the holy and cheerful use of the common Comforts of the Creatures, to the expectation of a better Life above the Sun. 2. As this is the best of it here, so this is made sure to the Godly, *it shall abide with him*, not as if every one of the Godly did always attain to actual rejoicing in God; but that it is the Lords constant allowance to them, and if they do make use of it, walking in his fear and obedience, they may have his joy fulfilled in themselves, and no man shall take it from them, amidst all sad changes, no cross shall marr it all the days which God giveth them *under the Sun.*

Hence Learn. 1. As the Ministers of Christ should be careful to hold forth consolations to the Godly, while they are threatning the Wicked, so if they would make these consolations effectual for their Comfort, they must insist upon the Discouragements which marr their Comfort by them, lest if they simply hold forth suitable consolation, and do not branch out the discouragements to which these consolations are to be applied, People may think Preachers little acquainted with the dint of the Temptations, wherewith they wrestle. Therefore Solomon having given to the Godly that consolation that it shall go *Well* with them, comes here to describe these Dispensations and Events which often marr their Comfort. *There is a just man to whom it happeneth according to the work of the Wicked &c.*

2. The Lord sees it fitting that the best of his Children should meet with as hard usage in the World, as the worst of Men have done, or could indure in their mortal state, and this he does that he may mortify their corruptions, and prevent their sharing with the Wicked in their future Lot 1 Cor. 11. 32. that he may try and so manifest to themselves and others, the reality of their Faith, Patience, Love, and other Graces Jam. 1.

3. For *There is a just man to whom it happens according to the work of the Wicked.*

3. The Lords outward dealing with the worst of Men, may seem so favourable and sweet to them for the present, as if they were the best servants that he had upon the earth, that he may thereby invite them to engage themselves in his Service Rom. 2. 4. and may heap Coals of fire upon their Head if they will not; For this is the other part of this Dispensation, *There be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the Righteous.*

4. It is only in this state that we are in upon Earth, that matters fall forth thus: In the other life the difference of Dispensations with the Godly and the Wicked shall be fully clear; For saith he, *There is a Vanity which is done upon the Earth* (we may be sure no where else) *a just man to whom it happeneth according to the work of the Wicked.*

5. However the Lords Dispensation in ordering outward things to fall forth to the Godly and Wicked, as is here expressed, be most wise and Holy, yet the same as men are instrumental in it, proves their condition here to be *Vain*, that is, that Happiness cannot be had by the injoyment of things earthly, and that every man is *Vain* who seeks in them: For Solomon reflecting not upon the Lords Dispensation in ordering things thus, but upon mens corruption, and their Lot in this World passes this sentence, *There is a Vanity which is done upon the Earth.* &c. and again *this is Vanity.*

6. The Children of the Lord should not only make Consci-

ence of rejoicing and Spiritual Mirth. when Dispensations are favourable and according to their mind, but when they are most grievous to carnal Sense, and Reason; If they can then rejoice, the power of divine consolations, and the reality of their Faith will be most apparent: For it is *when it happens to the just according to the work of the Wicked*, and contrary, that Solomon commends this frame of Spirit to be studied by the Godly, *then I commended Mirth. &c.*

7. To rejoice in God, and to comfort our selves in the hope of the promised reward, and so cheerfully to submit to the worst that can befall us in his way, is the best condition a Child of God can be in, in this World, spiritual Joy and Cheerfulness being that which makes all duties savoury and acceptable to God. *2 Cor. 9. 7* is blest with increase of strength for every duty and difficulty *Neh. 8. 10.* keeps the Soul fit for farther manifestations of his love *Isai. 64. 5.* And commends Religion, making it lovely to others *Ath. 2. 46. 47.* For he gives this as a Reason why he commended *Mirth*, because *a man bath nothing better under the Sun, then to eat and drink and to be Merry, to wit in a spiritual and holy manner.*

8. The Lords People should not only draw matter of rejoicing from his word and promises. *Psal. 119. 30.* And from the special tastes of his Love which he bestows upon them. *Cant. 1. 4.* But even from their common creature comforts, and they cannot but do so, if they take them all as streams flowing from the fountain of Gods special Grace and love to them *Gen. 33. 5.* And if they do not this, they have but the Beasts Happiness: For *there is nothing better, then to eat and drink, and so upon that occasion to be Merry in the Lord,*

9. However that measure of outward Comforts, such as Meat, Drink and the like, which the Lord allows upon his people, be sometimes less, and sometimes more, and the best of them may be put to great straits for want of these things yet as much of them as may occasion their Joy in him, they

shall never want, as long as God mindes to continue Life with them, and take service from them, *when they have nothing they shall be as if they posselt all things, being taught of him to have and to want, and in all estates to be content*: For in this sense it is his constant allowance to his own, *That shall abide with him of his Labour, the days of his life which God giveth him.*

10. Spiritual Mirth and joy in God, occasioned by the use of creature Comforts, is only allowed upon these, who are painfully imployed in some honest Labour, both outward in their callings, and spiritual in the practise of commanded duties, and not upon those who live in idleness, or eat and drink the gain of Falshood and oppression: For (saith he) that shall abide with him of *his Labour.*

11. It is only *under the Sun* that Creature Comforts are useful to provoke to spiritual joy, and there only men are called to Labour that they may have these, and joy in the use of them: When they are *above the Sun*, they shall rest from their Labour and shall not need to Eat and Drink that they may Rejoice, but shall have abundant Joy in the immediate Fruition of the Lords presence: For, *this only abides with man of his Labour, the days of his Life, which God gives him under the Sun*: He hath this expression *under the Sun*, twice in this verse, to draw the hearts of the Godly to long for that better Condition *above the Sun.*

Ver. 16. *When I applied mine heart to know Wisdom, and to see the Business that is done upon the earth (for also there is that neither day nor night sleep with his eyes)*

17 *Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the Sun: because though a man Labour to seek it out yet he shall not find it: yea farther though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.*

THe Preacher having commended the study of Heavenly Wisdom, and shewn how the Lord's People by the use thereof may have Comfort under the sadest Dispensations; He doth here by relating his own experience labour to humble all the Students of that Wisdom, in the sense of their own weakness, and impotency to comprehend Fully, or to satisfaction, the Works of God's Providence in the Government of this World, especially these Dispensations which seem so favourable to the Wicked, and severe to the Godly, that so they may be brought to Reverence, and submit unto the Sovereignty, and unsearchable Wisdom of God manifested in these Dispensations, though they cannot satisfy themselves as to the Reasons of them, nor reconcile the difference which seems to be between the Promises and the Threatnings of the Word, upon the one part, and the dealing of the Lord with Good and Bad upon the other.

This seems to be the main scope of these two Verses, and in expressing hereof, *Salomon* doth *First* give account of his painful Study to understand the Mind of God in his Dispensations, and this in several Particulars. 1. His seriousness therein, he applied; or as the Word is, *He gave away his Heart to know Wisdom.* This *to know Wisdom*, is not a Tautology, but it is to get the experimental and heart affecting Knowledge, as the Expression signifies, of what he did in some measure know, or that he laboured so to reflect upon his own knowledge, as he might be suitably affected therewith. 2. He shews how large the subject of his study was, *The Business that is done upon the Earth.* Business, as the Word signifies, is the humbling and toilsome exercise which God carves out to Men, and which Men undertake in the World; so that the object of his Study, was both Humane Affairs, and Divine Dispensations, which are both to be considered in one and the same thing. 3. His extraordinary diligence and pains in that study, which he doth modestly propose in the third person, as if he were speaking of others,

others, *There is* (saith he) *that neither Night nor Day taketh sleep*, which though it may be true of Mens excessive care, and anxiety about things Worldly, or of their pains in the study of Knowledge; yet by the Scope and Cohesion of these two Verses, wherein he relates only his own experience, it is most fitting to apply it to himself as speaking modestly of his own pains in the person of others, as *Paul* doth. *2 Cor. 12. 1.* The 4. Thing concerning his study, is the main and principal subject thereof. *Then* (saith he) *I beheld all the Works of God*; The meaning is, that while he was exercised as he hath exprest in the former three Particulars, the main thing that took up his Heart was to understand what the Lord intended by all his Dispensations, so far as the Light of the Word, and Spirit of God might lead him, and what was the use God would have Men to make of all these, this was his Study.

Next, He gives account of his success in this painful Study, and that was, he had learned one profitable Lesson, namely that he was a bad Scholar, and so might every Man find himself, he found, *That a Man cannot find out the Work of God*, which may be either applied to Men in Nature improving their natural parts, with that common assistance and influence which is not ordinarily denied unto them, to the utmost; And then the meaning is, that they cannot find out any thing conducing to their true Happiness: Or it may be applied to Men indued with Saving Knowledge, and having God's Spirit present with them, in the measure that he sees fitting; And so the meaning is, they cannot in this state fully comprehend nor know all that is to be known of God in his Dispensations.

And *Thirdly*, He giveth the reason of this deficiency, taken from Mans weakness, and this he illustrates by supposing him to have four Advantages in his Study. 1. Suppose he take never so much pains and labour in the use of means. 2. Suppose his search be never so accurat, as is imported in that Expression; though a Man *Labour* (which signifies painfully to

labour) to seek it out, the Word signifies to seek seriously and assiduously. 3. Suppose him to have a Stock of Wisdom to trade with in his Study, and that of the best sort: For in this Book, the Godly, or the Person indued with Saving Knowledge is ordinarily designed by the Name, *The Wise Man*. And 4. Suppose this Wise Man to have a fixed Resolution, and to have engaged himself expressly never to give over his Search. *Though he think to know it*, the Word is, though he say it, or though he Purpose it, yet he shall not be able to find it, or comprehend it fully, so as he may be satisfied with any measure of Knowledge he hath attained, but must Adore and Reverence God, as most Righteous, Wise and Holy in all his Dispensations, though he cannot see a reason of many of them; yea though the contrary should appear to his Carnal Reason and Sense.

Hence Learn 1. So dull are the Hearts of the Best in taking up things profitable, and so apt to weary and wander in the study thereof, that both Ministers in study of the Truth, and People in hearing of it delivered, have need frequently and seriously to apply and give up their Hearts of new to the same, and to be exhorted to Attention. For Solomon often before hath expressed his serious and accurate study of the Truth, and here he doth it again, importing that he held his Heart to it, and that those who should read or hear this Book would need often such a new Preface as is here, to quicken their Attention, *When I applied, or gave my Heart away to know Wisdom, &c.*

2. Even those who have attained to most distinct apprehensions of the Truth, and such clear Conceptions of these Observations which ought to be made upon the Lord's Dispensations, as they may be able to inform and instruct others thereanent, ought not to satisfy themselves herewith, but must reflect upon their own knowledge of these things, that they may get their Hearts affected suitably to these Impressions of the

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Wisdom, Power, Justice, Love, and other Properties of God which may be seen in his Dispensations, and must enrich themselves with particular instances of the things they know, and have observed concerning the Lord's dealing with particular Persons in such and such Cases, that their knowledge may become experimental. For this is to *know Wisdom*, to which Solomon gave away his Heart; *When I applied my Heart to know Wisdom.*

3. They that would grow in Saving Knowledge must not only study the Scriptures, and Works of Creation, Col. 3. 16. Ps. 19. 1. but they must also *Apply their Hearts* to the serious consideration of God's Works of Providence in the World, that they may see how consonant these are to the Word, how Threatning and Promises are by these daily fulfilled, and likewise to the consideration of the Carriage and *Businesses* of Men, both their painful toil and labour in their sinful Courses, that they may see their folly, and detest their way; and the pains of good Men in what is right, that they may approve thereof, draw matter of Praise therefrom, and be provoked to imitation: For all this is comprehended under the object of Solomon's study, *And to see the Business that is done upon the Earth.*

4. Not only are Men who serve Mammon and their Lusts, excessive in their pains, and for love to their Idols cruel to themselves; but even the best of God's Children in their most approved Studies, are sometimes in hazard to exceed in pains also, partly through love to their own Credit, and partly for want of humble dependance on God, which abates the anxious intension of their Spirits, and sweetens their Study. For as this Expression, which seems to import some excess in pains, being the *Night* is appointed for Man's rest, and then the Lord useth to give his Beloved sleep, is true of wicked Men, so may it be taken here especially in reference to Solomon himself in regard of his pains in his study, *There is that neither Night nor Day seeth sleep with his Eyes.*

5. It is Wisdom in Men to relate modestly their own pains for attaining to Knowledge, and not to speak of themselves as if they were singular therein, though their pains were never so great, lest they appear to be seeking their own Commendation, and so marr the success of their great pains. For *Solomon* speaking of himself, speaks as it were of others as no less painful than he, *There is* (saith he) *that neither Night nor Day sees Sleep.* &c.

6. They that would become truly Wise, and would gain experimental and heart affecting Knowledge, by studying the Events that fall out in the World, they must not stay their Thoughts upon Men, Instruments and second Causes, but must raise their Minds to the first Cause, and exercise their Thoughts mainly upon his Work, that they may see what Properties of his are written upon all Events, as they are *His Work*, and what use should be made of them for stamping the Heart with a Holy Fear of offending him, and for encouraging his People in his Service, seeing these are mainly intended by him in his working, and must look upon all things that fall out as one intire Work in God's Hand, so shall they see that what is Foolishly, Sinfully, and Unjustly acted by Instruments, the same is Wisely, Holily and Righteously managed by the Lord: For when *Solomon* applied his Heart to know Wisdom, and to see the Business that is done upon the Earth, then (saith he) *I beheld all the Work of God:* That was his main Study.

7. Though the sincere Student of Saving Knowledge may be sure of success and progress in that Study, *Hos.* 6. 3. and some sweetness to compensate his pains, *Pf.* 92. 4. and 111. 2. and even the study of common and natural things that are within the compass of a Mans station, uses to be blest with Divine Instruction. *Isa.* 28. 26. yet none can expect in this Life fully to comprehend all that may be known of God in any of his Works. or to find them out so as to satisfy their Carnal Reason, but must still be humble, and reverence the

unsearchable depth of his Wisdom. For this is it which *Solomon* found after his most serious search, that a Man cannot find out the Work that is done under the Sun.

8. As the Man that hath found his own inability to find out in a comprehensive and satisfactory way, any Work of God, hath found something worth his pains, to humble him, and make him reverence God's Wisdom, so even this much cannot be found out till after great pains, and especially till we study Events as they are God's Work. While one Man studies the *Business* of another, he may easily think to find him out, and to reach and over-reach by his Wit, the work of one like himself. For *Solomon* speaks of this as some considerable success of his pains, which he had after *Applying his Heart*, and beholding all things as God's Work, that he found at last, *That a Man cannot find out the Work of God.*

9. Suppose a Man to be never so indefatigable in pains and study, to have never so vast and comprehensive an Understanding, to have very great confidence of success, (which sometimes much advances it,) and never so great Desires and fixed Purposes of Heart to grow in Knowledge, he must if he know himself aright, after all his pains be humbled in the sense of his Short-coming, and when he hath sounded deepest by his Witt, whether Natural, acquired, or infused, must still acknowledge he cannot find the bottom of the unsearchable depth of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, which is to be seen in his Dispensations. For this *Solomon* found in his own experience, and by relating it here, labours to bring others to the acknowledgement of it, *That a Man cannot find out the work of God, because though a Man labour to find it, yea though a wise Man think to know it, he shall not be able.*

10. The cause of Man's inability to find out clearly the Mind of God in his Works, is to be found in himself, whose Understanding is darkened, and ruined by the Fall, and is but in repairing during his abode here; the Vanity and Corruption of

of his Mind and Affections, draws him still back from profitable, to the study of unprofitable things, and his Body being so weak that it cannot sufficiently assist his Mind in the use of means necessary for making progress in Knowledge. For Solomon here doth often mind Man of his inability and weakness as the cause of his *not finding out the work of God*, while he saith, *A Man cannot find out the work of God, because though a Man labour to seek it out, he shall not find it, yea though a Wise Man seek, &c.*

11. Even these that are indued with Saving Knowledge, have often this mixture of Corruption, which proves the imperfection of their Knowledge, and much hinders their progress, that they imagine themselves much more able than they are to comprehend the Mind of God, and promise to themselves greater success in their Pains than they have ground for. For Solomon here supposes even *the Wise Man* (which, in his writings, is the ordinary designation of the truly Gracious) *to think that he shall find out that which is impossible to be found out. Yea farther though a Wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.*

CH A P. IX.

THE ARGUMENT

THE Wise mans Scope in this Chap. being to further the true peace of the Godly, and to prevent the disquiet which might arise from the misjudging of, and miscarrying under, the various Dispensations of God mentioned in the former chap. He doth in the First part of this chap, unto the ver. 7. After his profession of his serious study of the works of God, notwithstanding of the forementioned inability in man satisfyingly to comprehend them; and his purpose to publish and explain what by this study he should attain to of them for the benefit of the Church, ver. 1. Set down some

useful Remarks he had made upon the Lords providences and mens dispositions and carriages under them. As 1. That the imbracers of Christ, right entertainers of the Spirit of Sanctification, and Students of spiritual Wisdom whereby they may know how to please God; They and all their service and matters are not only under his general providence and dominion as all other things are, but under his special favour direction and protection for their good, ver. 1. II. That neither Gods special love nor his hatred can be infallibly concluded either by persons themselves or others, from the outward events that are common to good and bad, ver. 1. III. (which evinceth the former Remark) what ever difference the Lord put betwixt the Godly and the wicked in his outward Dispensations at sometimes and in some cases, yet in his ordinary course of Providence, mercies and miseries come alike to them both, ver. 2. And upon occasion of this that they may the better know special love or hatred which cannot be known by outward events, he giveth the different descriptions of these two parties thus alike dealt with as to outward events. Calling the one 1. Righteous in regard of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and begun inherent Righteousness, 2. Good, having good in themselves and Communicative of it to others 3. Clean, tho' not from the infection and pollution; yet from the dominion and guilt of Sin, still washing themselves in the fountain of Christs Blood, 4. Sacrificers, that is conscionable and spiritual Worshipers, 5. Fearing of an Oath, as being ready to perform lawful Oaths both to God and man, and afraid of rash and sinful Oaths. And he calleth the other, 1. Wicked or restless in sin, 2. unclean, being under the Guilt and Pollution of Sin, 3. such as Sacrifice not, being neglecters and slighters of Gods Worship 4. Sinners as being devoted to and sold under Sin, 5. And Swearers, as taking Gods Name in Vain, and addicted to rash and false Swearing, ver. 2. IV. He remarketh the bad use which by reason of Corruption most men make of this equality of Events: Not only the Saints through unmortified Corruption may thereby be discouraged in their duty, Murmure against the Lord and incline to side with the Wicked, ver. 3. But especially the Wicked are thereby the more imboldened to Sin and the more insolent in Sinning, ver. 3. Which if continued in will terminate both in the first and second Death. ver. 3. And V. He produceth two powerful considerations (the not minding of which may be the cause of the fore-mentioned abuse of this equality of Dispensations) The First whereof. To bring the Godly to a cheerful submission under an afflicted Lot, To wit, That the saddest condition in the World hath advantages with it, which rightly improved may mitigate the bitterness thereof: in the discovery of which, He commendeth the state of natural life (abstract from the eternal condition) even tho' attended with troubles (1) From the society of others to which a living man is joind ver. 4. 2 From the ground of hope he hath that his life tho' for present sad, may afterwards be bettered, ver. 4. which is illustrated by a proverbial speech importing, That a living man tho' in a very abject condition (compared to a Dog) is preferable to the most eminent man (resembled by a Lyon) when Dead, ver. 3. And 3. From the knowledge they have or may have of the certainty of Death which may

mind them of preparing for it, by a right improvement of the comforts of this life and a cheerful submission under their afflictions, ver. 5. The Second consideration to stir up all to the right use making of outward comforts, is the certainty and necessity of parting with them at Death; Evidenced, 1. In that the Dead are ignorant of the estate of affairs here on Earth concerning their Estates, Relations &c: ver. 5. 2. That at Death they are deprived of all the temporal reward and fruit of their pains and labour, ver. 5. 3. That their memory which they design'd to perpetuate shall be among men much forgotten, ver. 5. And 4. Their love, hatred, Envy, and other passions as to their way of exercise here upon earthly Objects, is perished, ver. 6. And generally that they are no more that way concerned in things under the Sun as they were when here upon Earth, ver. 6.

Secondly, In the second part of this Chap. from ver. 7. To the end, are contained several directions as proper Remedies against that despondency and disquiet which is incident to the Saints under an afflicted lot, and may arise from the consideration of the equality of outward events to them and to the Wicked, 1. The First whereof is the holy and cheerful use of creature comforts which God allows upon them, for sweetning their life unto them even under their Crosses, ver. 7. 8. and 9. Which he First, Instanceth in three particulars. As 1. in reference to dyet, that men take the sober, suitable, and christian use of what meat and drink God allows them for encouraging and strengthening them in his service ver. 7. 2. As to Apparel and Ornaments of the Body, that they make use of such comeliness and decency in Apparel and Ornaments of the Body, as their station will permit, and may express their cheerfulness even under their Crosses ver. 8. And 3. Conjugal society, That being in a marriage-yoke, they are to live (especially the Husband who is to preceed in the duty) lovingly and cheerfully together, ver. 9. And Secondly, presseth by three Arguments. The 1. taken from the Lords acceptance of their persons and services, ver. 7. The 2. from the vanity of mans life and its subjection to so many miseries, ver. 9. And the 3. From the Lords designing outward Comforts to be a temporary encouragement and portion to the Godly even under their crosses, tho' they have better things to look for afterwards, ver. 9. II. A second direction for making the life of the Godly comfortable to them under a sad lot and for right improvement of the former comforts allowed on them under it, 1s, That they would use their outmost diligence in the performance of all commanded duties particularly in the prosecution of the duties of their calling, ver. 10. Which he presseth by an Argument taken from the danger of their being deprived of opportunities, either of contriving or acting of good, by Death, to which every man is pressing, ver. 10. III. The third direction is humbly to expect the success of our endeavours not from our own promising preparations or Abilities, but from God; and that we be not perplexed with the disappointments incident to human endeavours, ver. 11. 12. Which he illustrates, 1. By setting forth his own serious observation of the disappointments that attend human affairs, ver. 11. 2. He giveth several instances of this his serious Observation in things most
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promising for success, venerable not only to natural and civil, but also spiritual concerns, ver. 11. 3. He affordeth a two fold cause of these disappointments, The one is the not acknowledging the Lords foreknowledge and predetermination of all events and their fittest opportunities, ver. 11. The other is, not consulting the word and spirit of God for finding out the fittest seasons of Actions, ver. 12. And 4. He holdeth out what sad consequences follow: the not depending upon Gods secret and powerful providence in things, and ignorance of the fit seasons of actions in two similitudes of Birds and Fishes who through inadvertency are easily injured. ver. 12. IV. A fourth direction in order to the forementioned purpose, and for the better improvement of the former directions, is, The study of spiritual wisdom, illustrated. 1. By Solomons serious consideration of this Wisdom, and his esteem of the noble effects of it, ver. 13. 2. By a parable, or supposed history or (it may be) some particular providence falling out in his Fathers or his time of the deliverance of a city from a great strait by the wisdom of a poor man, when other means were wanting or did fail, ver. 14. 15. 3. By mentioning the ungrateful entertainments that this poor man meeteth with, notwithstanding his good service, he is slighted and despised ver. 15. Hence, 4. He inferreth as Wisdom is better then strength so when men want external advantages, they are by most men misregarded, ver. 16. V. And then in the Conclusion of the chap, He doth 1. Encourage to the peaceable prudent and humble communication and embracing of the Doctrine of this saving Wisdom even when it may not well be publickly avowed, and tho' by most despised, as proving more acceptable and successful in a strait, than the most publick and impetuous edicts of wicked Rulers among their flattering and foolish Subjects, ver. 17. 2. He again preferreth this spiritual Wisdom (knowing how ready we are to undervalue it) to all external means especially where it is wanting, ver. 18. And 3. That one or few of these wicked persons void of this Wisdom being countenanced, followed and not mourned over and witnessed against may deprive a whole society of many mercies and draw on great judgments upon it, ver. 18.

CHAP. IX.

Ver. 1. For all this I considered in mine heart, even to declare all this, that the righteous and the wise, and their works are in the hand of God, no man knoweth either love or hatred, by all that is before them:

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2. *All things come alike to all, there is one event to the Righteous and to the Wicked; to the Good and to the clean, and to the Unclean; to him that Sacrificeth, and to him that Sacrificeth not: as is the Good, so is the Sinner; and he that Sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.*

THe scope of this Chapter being to instruct the Godly how to judge aright of the Lords Dispensations, and how to carry themselves aright under them, so as they may have true peace and be free of vexation incident to them, Solomon, doth *First* shew that notwithstanding of mans inability to find out or clearly understand any of the works of God, mentioned in the close of the former Chapter, he was not discouraged in the study of them, but gave up his heart to know what might be known, and *purposed to declare*, or (as the word signifies) to *make plain* and clear to the Church of God, *All this*, namely both the shortness of mans wit, and what he himself had found out.

Next, He condescends upon three very useful observations which he had made upon the Lords working.

1. *That the Righteous and the Wise, and their works are in the hand of God*: by these denominations the *Righteous* and the *Wise*, the same persons in the same state are designed, namely, such as are fled to the Righteousness of the Messiah, and are studying Heavenly Wisdom, that they may walk unto well-pleasing, those persons and their *Works*, or (as the word is) their *Service* are *in the hand of God*, whereby is meant, not only that they and their matters are under the dominion of his Providence, as all things are *Psal. 95. 4.* but that they are under his special favour and protection, under his Fatherly providence for their Good, as the expression signifies, when it is applyed to the Godly, *Psal. 31. 15. Job. 10. 28.*

2. The second is, *No man knows either Love or Hatred, by all that is before him*, the meaning is, that neither the special Love, nor the displeasure of God, can be known to

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men themselves or to others by these things that are *before them* that is by outward events, which are common to good and bad: For of these things only as no certain and infallible evidences of Gods favour and love he speaks in this place, as will appear by the following reason, so that they do manifestly pervert the sense of this Scripture, who would from it infer that no comfortable assurance of a mans being in a state of favour with God can be attained unto in this life: For Solomon only excludes outward events as insufficient evidences of Gods love or hatred, as is clear both by this expression in the first verse *no man knows Love or Hatred by what is before them*, or (as it is in the Original) *before their Face*, and by the following words; but doth not exclude Gods own Graces bestowed upon a man, and manifested by his own Spirit, 1 Cor. 2. 12. from having evidences of his Love; especially considering that so much of the Scripture is written for that end, that his people may know that he loves them, and so may have true Comfort. 1 Joh. 3. 14. And 5. 13.

3. The Third Observation is a Reason of the Second, that all things come alike to all, which is not to be understood as if the Lord did not sometimes put a difference between the Godly and the Wicked, even by his Dispensations, by exempting the Godly from these Judgements which often take away the Wicked, as is clear in the Examples of *Noah, Lot, Nabab*, and others, but the meaning is, that the Godly and the Wicked are alike prosperous and alike afflicted, and rather the Godly are under the saddest of Dispensations; and that he speaks of outward Events, or as the Word *Event* signifies, Occurrences of Providence, is yet more clear by the following words, *There is one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked*, &c. in which words he giveth several Denominations or Tittles of them that are in a state of favour, and them that are not, pointing at their different state and qualifications, by which they may discern themselves and others also, so far as is fit for them to judge,

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whether they be in a state of favour or not, although they cannot judge of this by outward Dispensations.

As for the *Godly* they are called 1. *Righteous*, not for any perfect and personal Righteousness, but for the Righteousness of Christ, imputed to them, and inherent Holiness begun in them. 2. They are *Good*, pointing at their *Bountiful* or *Edifying* Disposition (as the word signifies) which makes them study to do good to others, thereby resembling their Heavenly Father, and this is the Mark of a Justified Person. 3. They are *Clean* not from all Sin, as before Chap. 7. 20. but they are Clean from the guilt of Sin, and are daily setting about the cleansing of themselves from the Pollutions that are in the World. 4. They are such as *Sacrifice*, that is, they are conscientious Attenders upon God's Worship, whereof one part, which was the principal in *Solomon's* time, is put for the whole: And 5. They are such as are afraid to offend by *Rash* or *False Oaths*, or neglecting to perform Lawful Vows and Engagements to God or Man, and by these Qualifications they may know themselves to be beloved of God, who cannot know it by outward Events.

And *Next*, For the *Wicked*, they are designed by so many contray Names as clear their state and temper. 1. They are *Wicked*, or (as the Word signifies) restless in their sinful Courses. 2. They are *Unclean*, under the guilt of their by-past Sins, and still wallowing in new Pollutions. 3. They are such as *Sacrifice not*, that is, they either neglect, or slight the Worship of God. 4. They are *Sinners*, that is, devoted and given up to their Sins, otherwise all deserve that Name. And 5. They are such as profane the *Name* of God by *Rash* or *False Oaths*, or otherwise, contrary to the Third Command.

Hence Learn 1. The unsearchableness of the Wisdom of God manifested in his Dispensations, and our shallowness and weakness of Wit to comprehend the same fully, ought not to discourage us in the study thereof, but should stir us up to

give our Hearts away so much the more to it: For Solomon having in the close of the former Chapter, asserted that *No Man can find out the Work of God*, not the most painful and wise among Men, he saith here, *For all this* (or notwithstanding of all this) *I considered in my Heart, &c.*

2. As all that give their Hearts away to the study of the Mind of God manifested in his Word and Works, especially those who have an Office in the House of God to teach others, should make this one end of their pains, that they may attain to what may be profitably held forth and communicat to others for their good, and not knit up their Observations like a Talent in a Napkin; So whatever any in their Stations and places bring forth to others, they should study to do it with clearness and plainness: For Solomon considered all this in his Heart, even to declare it, the Word signifies to make it Plain as upon a Table, that he that runs may read. *Hab. 2. 2.*

3. However the Godly are apt to apprehend themselves misregarded by the Lord, *Pf. 31. 22.* and their Service rejected by him, *Pf. 22. 3.* yet their Persons and their imperfect Service are in his Hand, their Persons to be provided for, protected and preserved, till they come to Glory, *Job. 10. 28, 29.* and their Service is in his Hand to purge it from the dross of it, to accept of it, and reward it. *Rev. 8. 3.* For the Righteous and the Wise, and their Works are in the Hand of God.

4. It is only they who are fled to the Righteousness of Christ, and are studying what is Righteous in his Sight, and for that end are endued with Heavenly Wisdom, and studying progress therein, who can take the comfort of this, that they and their Service are thus in his Hand: Therefore are those to whom this Priviledge belongs thus described, *The Righteous and the Wise and their Works are in the Hand of God.*

5. Although the Lord's outward Dispensations are sometimes so favourable, that they may serve to confirm and clear those who are otherwise confirmed, concerning his Love and

respect to them, *Psal.* 41. 11. And sometimes they are so terrible that they speak plainly his displeasure to them that are walking contrary to him. *Ezek.* 21. 17. yet no outward Dispensation, be it never so favourable and sweet, can be the prime or infallible evidence of the Lords favour and Love, neither can any Dispensation, how sad and terrible so ever, be an infallible sign of his hatred, or rejection of any: and therefore they are injurious to God and to their own Souls, who because of any favourable Dispensation, would conclude that the Lord approves and favours them, as the worst of men are ready to do, *Nos.* 12. 3. or who conclude his displeasure and loathing of them, because of hard Dispensations, as the best are ready to do. *Nat.* 49. 14. For (saith he) *No man can know Love or Hatred by all that is before them,*

6. Those who were differenced from all eternity in Gods Counsel and decree, whereby he purposed good to some, and past by others, who are differenced in time by their effectual calling, and other priviledges, and who shall be differenced at the last day as far as the *Right* and *Left* hand differ; those (I say) may be alike dealt with in regard of outward Dispensations. The Godly may be crossed, afflicted, tormented with Sicknels, Poverty, Disgrace, exile, Heavyness of Spirit and the like, as well as the Wicked: And the Wicked comforted with success, Credit, Riches, Ease and Cheerfulness of Spirit no less, yea sometimes more than the Godly, the Lord would not have the better or the worse of these things valued by men as their Happyness or their Misery: For this is *Solomon's* third observation, which he declares to the Church, *All things come alike to all, there is one event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*

7. When we see the Godly afflicted, as Wicked Men deserve to be, and Wicked Men comforted by outward favours, as (according to our apprehension) the Godly should be, we ought thereby to be led to the believing consideration of this, that God would have us taking other grounds whereupon to

conclude his Love and favour, or his displeasure and indignation toward us. For as a proof of that, that neither *Love* nor *Hatred* can be known by the *things before us*, this is given; *All things come alike to all, there is one event &c.*

8. So excellent is a reconciled state in regard of the many priviledges they have who are in it, and the many divine qualifications, wherewith they are endued, that they have many *Stiles* and *Titles* of honour wherein they comfort themselves against all sad Events; and against the community of their lot here, with that of the worst of men: For here several of their *Stiles* are reckoned out by *Solomon*, *Righteous, Good, Clean, such as Sacrifice* and *sear Oaths*.

9. So woful is the case of unreconciled Souls, and so many are the parts of their perverseness, that few words cannot express the same, therefore *Solomon* here makes use of many to design them that are not beloved of God, They are *Wicked, Unclean, Sinners, such as Sacrifice not, Swearers*,

10. The Lord looks upon them whom he Loves as they are in Christ, and reckons them by their better part, and according to what he intends to make them at last: Though they be in themselves *Unrighteous, Unclean, Wicked, Slighters of his Worship* and *Prophaners of his Name*, yet because they are considered in their Cautioner they get all the contrary Names, *Righteous, Clean, Good, &c.*

11. Only those who have fled to Christs Righteousness, and so are made *Righteous*, are the persons who may conclude themselves favoured of God, and all that have done so, are made in some measure conform to their Heavenly Father in goodness, they are also made to purify themselves, even as he is pure, they are tender and conscientious of his Worship, especially his publick Ordinances, and so are they of any lawful ingagement they have taken on, for these go all together; and by the contrary, those have no ground to think otherwise of themselves, than as in an unreconciled state, or of their way

as hateful to God, who are restless in the course of their Sin, as the word *Wicked* signifies, who are living under unrepented of guilt and daily dehling themselves farther by serving their Lusts, who neglect or slight the Worship of God, and prophane his Name. For these and the like are the marks whereby men may judge and be able to discern whether they be in a state of favour or not: For Solomon having denied Love or Hatred to be known by outward events which come alike to good and bad; he doth with all give such a description of them that are beloved, and them that are abhorred of God, as all may know their state, and be able to judge of it, while he saith, *There is one event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked, to the Good and to the Clean, and to the Unclean. &c.*

Ver. 3. *This is an Evil among all things that are done under the Sun, that there is one event unto all, yea also the heart of the Sons of men is full of evil; and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the Dead.*

Here is the *Fourth* observation which the Lord Spirit taught Solomon to make upon his Dispensations, and mens disposition and carriage in order thereunto, and according to his professed purpose in the first words of the Chapter to make clear to others, and it is concerning the ordinary effect which the equality of Events spoken of in the *Third* Observation, hath upon the most part of men: *There is an Evil* (saith he) *among all things that are done under the Sun, that there is one Event &c.* Which cannot be understood as if he were censuring the holy and wise providence of God in permitting and ordering it to be thus, that outward Events should be common to good and bad: But the meaning is, that as Afflictions to the Godly are of themselves Evil, grievous and bitter to their flesh, and often corrections for their Sins, and upon the other hand; Pro-
speri-

Prosperity is an Evil to the Wicked as it is a heaping of Coals of fire upon their head; So mainly this equality of Events to Good and Bad, is *Evil*, in regard of the bad use that most men by Reason of their corruption, make of it, especially Wicked Men who therefore shake off all care of Piety, and wax bold in their Sins, seeing they prosper so much in them, and in so far as Corruption is unamortified in the Godly, the sight of this equality of events, becomes an evil to them, discouraging them in their Duty, and often inclining their hearts to side with Wicked Men in their course, as appears by *Psal. 73. 10. &c.* And this he calls an *Evil among all things*, or as the words may be rendered an Evil *above* all things, to point out the frequency, or rather the hainousness of this abuse of the Lords Dispensations, for so the Hebrews do sometimes express the Superlative degree, *Prov. 30. 30.*

Next, He explains how this is an *Evil* to Wicked men, in two expressions, *their hearts are full of Evil*, which may be either taken for the cause why they make a bad use of their Prosperity, even because they are void of the Grace of God, and full of contrary Evils, or rather for the effect of their injoying Prosperity, and observing the afflictions of the Godly, they give up themselves to all sorts of Wickedness, as if God were not displeased with their way, or would never be wroth with them, seeing he seems so, in his Dispensations, to favour them. And this he enlarges by another expression, *Madness* (saith he) *is in their Hearts, &c.* Or (as the word *Madness* signifies) Boasting, Pride, and Insolency in their Sins take up their Hearts all along their Life.

And Lastly, He shews what shall be the end of their course, *after that* (saith he) *they go to the Dead*, which is not simply to be understood of their going to the state of the Dead, abstracting from their future and eternal state, seeing that is common both to the Wicked and Godly: but the Death he speaks of, is that which is the wages of Sin to the Wicked, that is temporal

Death

Death, putting a period to their Prosperity and sinful courses, and making them enter into Eternity of torment, which is the second Death: And this is spoken to deterr them from their sinful Courses.

Hence Learn. 1. These favourable and prosperous Dispensations, which wicked men meet with, and which they should take for invitations to Repent for former abuse of Gods goodness, and as engagements to his service and obedience, who deals so liberally with them, are turned by them into occasions of Sinning, made fuel to their Pride *Hof. 13. 6.* and contempt of the threatenings of the word, *Psal. 73. 9.* so do they heap upon themselves by their abuse of these things Wrath against the day of Wrath: For he speaks mainly in reference to Wicked Mens abusing this Dispensation, that they prosper as much, yea often more than the Godly, while he saith, *There is an Evil among all things that are done under the Sun, that there is one Event &c. also the Hearts of the Sons of men are full of Evil, &c.*

2. Mens abusing of outward success and Prosperity to imbolden themselves the more in Sinning against God, is common among all that are unrenewed, and is a most heinous crime, being a Sin against the goodness and long suffering of God, and the occasion of many other Sins, for both the commonness and heinousness of it, are imported in this expression, *There is an Evil among all things done under the Sun.*

3. Though it be an ordinary delusion among men, to think their Hearts good, were their way never so vile, yet not only are the Hearts of all men naturally altogether void of any thing that is good, and that is the cause why they abuse so licentiousness the goodness of God manifested in his Dispensations, but likewise the more of his Goodness they meet with, their Wickedness grows the more, their vicious habits, contempt of God, love to their Lusts hardness of Heart, and spiritual security grow upon them, for this may be either taken for the cause

cause why they abuse their Prosperity, to grow thereby *Mad* in their Sins, or for the effect of their abusing of it: *The hearts of the Sons of men are full of Evil.*

4. As unrenewed men especially in Prosperity do ordinarily go *Mad* in their Sins, violently prosecuting their Lusts, boasting and Glorifying in their sinful ways, as if there were no account to be given thereof, as the word *Madness* signifies: So what ever use of their wit they may have to plot mischief, to execute their purposes, and carry on their Plots closely, they are really *Mad*, incapable of any wholesome counsel destroying their own Souls, and taking pleasure in so doing, like Mad Men: For (saith he) *Madness is in their Hearts.*

5. While Men abuse the Lords Dispensations, by flattering themselves in their Sins, and perswading themselves of his love and favour, notwithstanding of their Wickedness, because they prosper; there is a spiritual distemper and *Madness* upon their Spirits: For it is mainly in reference to the mis-judging of the Lords Dispensations, and making this wrong use of them, that he saith *Madness is in their Hearts.*

6. Men void of Saving Grace never weary of their *Mad* and sinful Courses, while Life or Strength continues, after they have along their Life abused their prosperity by Pride, Insolence, Oppression and Slighting of God, even when Death draws near, they but grow yet more *Mad* in Sin, repining against God and his Providence, because they cannot longer enjoy their sinful Pleasures, and so they carry their Sins to the very Gates of Death with them: For (saith he) *Madness is in their Heart while they live, and after that they go to the Dead, he speaks of their sinful Courses, as having an immediat connexion with their very Death.*

7. As Temporal Death shall put an end to the sinful Pleasures of Wicked Men; so eternal Death shall then begin to seize upon them, whereof the Servants of Christ should often put *Mad* Sinners in mind whether they will believe or not:

For

For there is more in this last Expression, than a simple minding Men of Natural Death which is common to all. *And after, that they go down to the Dead.*

Ver. 4. *For to him that is joined to all the Living, there is hope: for a living Dog is better than a dead Lyon.*

5. *For the Living know that they shall dye: but the Dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a Reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.*

6. *Also their love and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the Sun.*

THe Preacher giveth here two Considerations serving to work the Hearts of the Godly to a cheerful Submission under an hard Lot in the World, and to stir up all to use their Life, and the Comforts of it well; that so they may prepare for Death. The *One* is, That the meanest or most afflicted Life hath some Advantages with it, which being improved may make Men digest the Afflictions attending it. The *Other* is, That they who have the most prosperous state in this World must part with all the Comforts of it at Death. And so the Words may be also looked upon, as containing the Reason of Mens madness in abusing the Lord's Dispensations, as is express in the former Words, namely their inconsideration of the Advantages of Life, and the necessity of parting with all the Comforts of it at Death.

In setting out the first, he commends the state of natural Life, while he saith, *To him that is joined to all the Living,* which is a kind of description of any Living Man, and commendation of his state. 1. From the Social temper which he ought to have, and the Advantage he hath thereby, *There is hope*, how sad soever his Condition be, he may have hope that it may be better, or there is ground of hope to him, if he make

use of his Life, that he may get all the troubles mitigated and sanctified, and so may prepare for a better, and this he doth illustrate by a common Proverb, *A living Dog is better than a dead Lyon*, which is a Speech applicable to many Purposes, and according to the matter in hand, the meaning of it is, that a Living Man who hath the most abject and contemptible Life, (for such a Man useth to be set out by the name of a Dog in Scripture, as *2 King. 8. 13.*) is *Better*, that is, he may be more useful for himself and others, than the Greatest Man now being Dead. Here it would be considered for clearing of the following purpose, that while he compares the Living and the Dead, and prefers the Former to the Latter, he doth not speak of the Dead considered as to their future Eternal State, for so they are beyond all comparison, either better or worse, but abstracting from that, considers them simply as by Death deprived of Natural Life, and the Advantages thereof. 2. The Second Thing that commends Life is, *That the Living know what they shall Die*: That which none can be altogether ignorant of, who have the use of Reason, and which all should actually consider, he speaks of as agreeing to all, and this is a great Advantage if it be improved, that Men knowing this, may while they have opportunity prepare for Death, loose their Hearts from their earthly Enjoyments, from which Death at last will separat them, use their Allowance cheerfully for their encouragement in God's Service, and comforting of themselves against the Afflictions of their Life, which is the Scope.

Now in opposition to these Advantages of Life, he comes in the next place to point out the Disadvantages of the State of the Dead, considered as hath been formerly exprest, and only mentions such as point out the privation of Natural Comforts, because these will weigh more with Men who seek their Happiness in this Life, than if he should tell them of the Torments of Hell, or separation from God's Favour. The First is, *That the Dead know not any thing*, to wit, of the state of Affairs here,

As

As for Example, how it fares with their Relations, and the purchase they made in the World, and so he doth not deny the Being of the Soul after separation from the Body, nor consequently the essential properties of it, such as the exercise of Reason, and the like. 2. *They have no more a Reward*, he speaks not of the future Reward of their Wel-doing and Evil-doings, which certainly abides both Good and Bad, *Mat. 25. 46.* but of the temporal Fruit of their Labour and Pains which they have taken in this World, at Death they have an end of that. 3. *The memory of them is forgotten*, to wit, among Men on Earth, which is a reason of the former; they placed some Happiness in perpetuating their Fame and Memory; therefore they are much forgotten, and so lose that Reward they looked for. 4. *Their Love, Envy, and Hatred are perished*, which is not to be understood as if these Passions and Affections of the Soul were extinguished at Death; the Soul after that retaining its own Nature, and doubtless there is perfect Love which casts out all Fear in the Souls of Just Men made perfect; and there is also in the Souls of the Damned, Hatred and Envy against God and good Men, and against one another: but he means that these Passions and Affections of the Soul are at Death gone as to the exercise of them upon things in the Earth, which they are spent upon while Men live here. And because it were long to reckon out all particulars of this sort, he closes with a general, *Neither have they any more a Portion of any thing that is done under the Sun*, which also explains the former, that he denies their Knowledge, their Reward, their Memory and their Affections, only in reference to things under the Sun, they have no more to do with these things. All which Considerations may wean Mens Hearts from this Earth, and may make the Godly content with a small measure of these things, seeing they that have most of them, must after a little time part with them, and never enjoy them any more.

H h h a

Hence

Hence Learn 1. Every Living Man should associate himself with others, not in Evil, but to receive Good from others, and to communicate Good to them: For thus he describes every Living Man, *he that is joined to the Living.*

2. How hard soever any Mans Condition may be in this World, so long as God continues Life with him, he should not altogether cast away his Confidence, nor lose his Hope, but that there may be a Mitigation or Out-gate; nor should any quite hopes of others, nor labour to break off their hopes, but that their Condition may be better, while God continues Life: For, saith the Wise Man, *To him that is joined to all the Living there is hope.*

3. Even this, that there is some ground of Hope for every Living Man; that there may be a Mitigation of an hard Condition, and an out-gate from it, and that there is a possibility of Ensuring a better Life, should make Men cheerfully submissive to the worst Condition that God's Providence carves out to them, *Wherefore should a Living Man complain of his Lot, seeing to him that is joined to all the Living, there is hope.*

4. Necessary Truths may be illustrat by some pertinent Proverb, or Similitude commonly used among Men, that thereby the Mind may be for a little so diverted from the serious purpose, to think of another more common, which hath some resemblance with it, and represents it of new to the mind, that it may shortly turn again recreated to the consideration of it. For here Solomon makes use of a Proverb, which seems to have no farther Mystery in it, than to commend Life, though it be mean and afflicted, as desirable, and so to be made use of for making sure a better, *A living Dog is better than a dead Lyon.*

5. They that are in the most abject, and despicable condition in the World, should esteem their life, a desirable Blessing of God, seeing while they have it, they may have ground of hope, to do yet farther service to God, to attain to a better

condition, and especially to prepare for, and make sure to themselves a better Life, therefore doth he commend Life by such a proverb as is applicable to the most base and contemptible Life, that any can have in the World, *a living Dog is better than a dead Lyon.*

6. The main business of our Life, and the special use we should make of it, is to mind Death, and prepare for it, yea it should sweeten our Life (though many ways miserable) to us that we know we must Die, and have opportunity of preparing for Death: For however most mens disposition and carriage be, as if they did not know that they were to Die, but rather as if they were perswaded, that they should live here eternally, yet because it is so unsutable for mortal men not to mind Death, and prepare for it, he speaks of it as a thing granted that all know it, and as an advantage and commendation of Life, that they know so much, and have time in their life to consider it, *for the living know that they shall Die.*

7. Though Souls departed have undoubtedly the exercise of reason, the damned to increase their Torment *Luk. 16. 27.* and the Glorified to increase their Blessedness *Heb. 12. 23.* Yet all of them are without the knowledge of the things of this life wherein Worldly men seek their Happiness, as how their affairs are managed, how it fares with their Friends and Relations on Earth; The damned are so taken up with aggravating their guilt, and with thoughts of their Torment, and the Spirits of Just men made perfect are so taken up with the Praises of their Redeemer, that they consider nothing of things here below, whence it follows clearly that they cannot be our Intercessours, *For the Dead know not any thing.*

8. Though there be no question of a Glorious Reward of well-doing after this Life, *Rev. 12. 14* Nor of a just recompense of mens Wickedness *Rom. 2. 6.* yet Death puts an end to all these things, which Worldly men take for a Reward of their pains in this

Life

life, such as Earthly pleasures, Credit, Riches, and the like. For, in this sense Men, after Death *have no more any Reward.*

9. Though it be incident both to good and bad to be forgotten among Men, yet it is a peculiar punishment to the Wicked, that after Death they shall not be remembered by the Godly but with detestation *Prov. 10. 7.* Nor shall the Lord ever think on them to give them any comfort or ease. *Luk. 16. 25.* For this is spoken with a special eye to the Wicked as vexing to them, that they must want these things they value so much. *The Memory of them is forgotten.*

10. As wicked men carry their sinful passions and delights, namely their inordinate love to the World, their hatred of God, his people and ways. to the very gates of Death with them, and can carry the same no farther as to any effects which these may have here, so the consideration of the perishing of these at Death should abate and moderate their Affection to things Earthly, restrain their Hatred and envy at the Godly, and should also make the Godly not value much their favour, nor fear their hatred or envy, but cheerfully submit to want the one, and be the object of the other, considering that after a little time this will be truly said of them, *Also their Love, and Hatred, and their Envy, is now perished.*

11. They that humbly and seriously study the Scripture will still find a key beside the darkest place, to open up the meaning thereof, so far as may be profitable; and something in the bosome of these places which are most obnoxious to mistakes, to guard against these: For least Solomon's words may be thought to favour of denying the immortality of the Soul, while he saith, *at Death mens Love and Hatred are perished*, he explains himself in this last expression, and makes clear that he speaks of these passions and affections only in reference to things upon the Earth, *Neither have they anymore a Portion for ever, saying, what is done under the Sun.*

12. Men that seek their Happiness in this Earth do put the thoughts

thoughts of Death so far from them; and are so little serious in considering their latter end, that Christs Ministers had need to insist much in representing to them, the necessity of their parting with their Earthly Enjoyments, whereupon they spend their spirits. Therefore doth the Spirit of God direct the divine Preacher to give so many instances of these things, whereof Death will deprive them, *The Dead know not any thing, their memory is forgotten, their Love, Hatred, and Envy are perished*; and after these, leads them to think upon the loss of all their outward injoyments; while he saith, *Neither have they any more a Portion of any thing that is done under the Sun.*

13. It is Wisdom in the Ministers of Christ to make choise of such Aguments to commend truth and duty to their Hearers, as may be most prevalent with them for that end, and to insist most upon these, tho' there be others more weighty, and of greater force, as to the inferring of the point intended: For, *Solomons* main scope being to wear mens Hearts from seeking Happiness in the Earth, to stir them up to use life well, and to prepare for Death, he doth not describe the Torments which the Wicked feel in Hell, nor the Joyes of Heaven which they lose, but because they think it a Hell great enough to be deprived of these Earthly Comforts wherein they placed their Heaven in this life; Therefore he insists upon these, *They know not any thing, their memory is forgotten, their Love, Hatred and Envy are now perished, neither have they any more a Portion of any thing that is done under the Sun.*

Ver. 7. *Go thy way eat thy bread with Joye and drink thy Wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.*

8. *Let thy Garments be always white; and let thy head like no Ornament.*

9. *Live joyfully with the Wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity which he hath given thee under the Sun, all the days of thy vanity: For*

that is thy Portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the Sun.

THe Preacher here prescribes a remedy for that discouragement and vexation of Spirit which is ordinarily incident to the Godly, upon the consideration of their hard lot in the World, and particularly, the equality of events formerly mentioned: And that is the holy and cheerful use of outward comforts upon spiritual grounds, that so this life may be in some measure sweetned to them. And this cheerful fruition of the Lords allowance, he presseth in several instances, and by several Arguments.

The first instance is, that men should *eat their Bread with Joy, and drink their Wine with a merry Heart*, in which words he doth not excite to sensuality, or excess of carnall pleasures, but to the sober holy and cheerful use of that measure of the Creatures, which is appointed for strengthening and refreshing nature, in Gods service, and which is suitable to every mans rank and condition. And so it is the same in substance with that which is spoken of the primitive Christians, that they *did eat their Meat with gladness, and singleness of Heart Praising God, &c.* Act. 2. 46, 47. And this appears by the first Reason whereby he presses this, which is a ground purely spiritual: For (saith he) *God now accepteth thy works*, whereby it is clear that he speaks to a reconciled person, who by these outward Blessings is encouraged in the duties of his calling, and is in some measure confident that God is well pleased with his sincere pains in serving him, and upon that ground hath the more spiritual Comfort in making use of outward Comforts.

The Next instance is in the matter of apparel, and the outward deportment of the Body, *Let thy Garments be always white*, whereby is meant no farther, but such decency and comeliness of Apparel (which may be in the use of the coarsest cloathing) as every ones rank and condition permits, and may express their

their spiritual Joy and cheerfulness even under their crosses, and this he expresses in terms taken from the Customs that were used in these Countries at festivals or times of rejoicing *Eph. 5. 15.* And the same he holds forth in another expression, *and let thy Head lack no Oynments*, whereby he doth not justify the lascivious perfuming of the Body used by proud Gallants which is like Flowers spread upon Dead Corps; their being often most of these Powders and Oynments put upon the Head, where there is least Grace or Honesty in the Heart: But, only he presses the keeping comely of these parts of the Body especially which are exposed to the sight of others, that so *things of Honesty may be provided in the sight of all Men*; And this he expresseth also in terms taken from a Custom among the Jews of anointing the head in times of rejoicing, *Joh. 12. 3.* From which they did abstain in times of Humiliation *Dan. 10. 3.*

The Third Instance is, Of the use of Conjugal Society, *Let us joyfully with the Wife whom thou lovest, &c.* he speaks of honest and chaste Love, which married Persons have, and adds two farther Reasons, The *One* is, that the days of this Life are *Vain*; that is, subject to many Miseries, and this he repeats twice, to make it take the deeper impression, and to incite Men to Praise Him who hath allowed any thing to sweeten so vain a Life, and to keep them mindful of it in the midst of the greatest plenty of these outward Enjoyments. The *Other* Reason is, that this comfortable Enjoyment of outward Blessings, is a temporary Portion carved out for encouragement to the Godly, who have better things in another Life to look for, and therefore no Discouragements should hinder them from taking the comfortable use of his Allowance.

Hence Learn 1. Of all Men in the World the Godly may most freely and cheerfully use that measure of the Creatures Comforts, which the Lord bestows upon them, they only having the sanctified use of these things, *Th. 1. 15.* so that it is a groundless prejudice which Carnal Minds have against Religion,

gins, and the exercise of Piety, as if they did foster Melancholy. For to the Godly Man is this spoken, *Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart, for God accepteth, &c.*

2. Although the Godly have grounds of Rejoicing, which are of a higher nature than the best of outward Comforts, even their Justification, and Peace with God, *Rom. 5. 1. &c.* which are able to cheer their Hearts, when these Creature Comforts are wanting, or not comfortable, *Hab. 3. 17, 18.* yet when the Lord lays those things to their Hand, they ought to use them with freedom and cheerfulness, and in obedience to His Command, as a Remedy against their Discouragement, and a Diversion from such sad Thoughts as spend their Spirits, and marr their Joy in His Service; that their Natural Spirits being refreshed by those things, they may bear their Crosses with the more courage. For supposing always that which he expresseth afterward, that Man's Life is *Vain*, or subject to many Miseries, he prescribes this as a Remedy against the Discouragement which may arise therefrom, *Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart. &c.*

3. As the Godly are ready to exceed, upon the one Hand, in the use of their lawful Comforts, and so have need of a Bridle to keep them from going beyond the bounds of Sobriety and Moderation *Luk. 21. 34.* So are they prone upon the other Hand to deny themselves the benefit of these things which the Lord's Bounty doth allow upon them, either thro' excess of Grief and Fear, or misbelieving Apprehensions that nothing is allowed upon them, *Joh. 33. 20. Ps. 107. 18.* or from Scruples of Conscience, arising from their ignorance of their Christian Liberty, *Rom. 14. 2. &c.* so that they have need of a Spurr to make them use with Freedom and Cheerfulness of Spirit, their allowance of outward Comforts: therefore doth the Spirit of the Lord excite the Godly who are wrestling thro' the Miseries of this Life, to take cheerfully their allowed Comforts by
this

this Exhortation, *Go thy way, eat thy Bread with Joy, and drink thy Wine with a merry Heart, &c.*

4. Although the best performance of the Best on Earth be imperfect, and so unworthy in it self to be accepted; *Ihu. 6. 6.* yet these Performances which are atchieved by a person reconciled to God, *Prov. 15. 8.* in obedience to His Command, *1 Sam. 15. 22.* in His Strength, *Pf. 71. 16.* for His Glory, *1 Cor. 10. 31.* and have the perfume of Christ's Merits upon them, *Rom. 8. 3.* these are acceptable and well-pleasing to Him, as if they were perfect. For so much is imported in this Reason, *God now accepteth,* or (as the Word signifies) delighteth in thy work.

5. The Godly may not only be enabled to do what may be acceptable to God, but they may attain to the knowledge of this, that their Performances are acceptable to Him, while they are elevated beyond the Sphere of their Natural Abilities; and ordinary Temper, to act Holily from such Principles; and for such Ends as were exprest in the former Doctrine, and have the Lord's Spirit testifying his acceptance of their Works by giving them Peace, and Joy in Himself. *Heb. 11. 4.* For this Reason could not have force, except a Godly Man might know that *God accepteth his Works.*

6. The main thing that makes true Cheerfulness in the use of common Comforts, is God evidencing His acceptance of our Performances, it is but a poor Comfort that Men accept and approve of our Works, if we have not ground to think that God doth so also, but if we have this, then we may have much Comfort and Sweetness in all our Enjoyments: For he gives this as a Reason why Man should eat his Bread with Joy, &c. *Because (saith he) God now accepteth thy work.*

7. Men in an unreconciled estate if they were sensible of their own Condition, could not take Comfort in any thing that they enjoy, they would *Eat their Bread with sorrow; and drink their Wine with astonishment,* seeing *God is angry with them*

every day, *Ps.* 7. 11. and that even their best Works are in *Abomination* to him. *Prov.* 15. 8. For this is given as a ground of that cheerful use of the Creatures which is peculiar to the Godly, *God now accepteth thy works.*

8. Though prodigality in Apparel, manifested in Mens affecting strange Fashions, *Lev.* 19. 8. and bestowing excessive cost and pains upon it, be a Sin detestable to God, *1 Pet.* 3. 3. yet it is not only futable for Christians, but it is their duty *To provide for things honest in the sight of all Men*, even in the matter of their Apparel, so far as their Rank, and the Lord's Dispensations with them permit; they who have the shame of their Nakedness covered with the white Linnen of Christ's Righteousness, and their Souls adorned with His Grace, may with greatest freedom and peace put on their outward Cloathing, and may wear the same with cheerfulness, how coarse and mean soever it be. For to those *Solomon* here speaks, *Let thy Garments be always white.*

9. Although the Lord's People in some cases, as in times of Persecution, or when their Corruptions are like to prevail against them, are bound to keep their Bodies in subjection, *1 Cor.* 9. 27. yet when the Lord is more favourable to them, and he is testifying his acceptance of their Works, they ought to signify their Joy and Cheerfulness by their respect to their outward Man, in such a manner as is decent and usual in the places where they live. For it is mainly in reference to times of favourable Dispensations, and when *God accepts the works* of His People, that *Solomon* presseth here a cheerful Deportment, which is a Moral Duty recommended in ceremonial Terms, futable to the custom of the times wherein he lived. *Let thy Head lack no Oynement.*

10. As there are peculiar Comforts attending Conjugal Society, for compensing the many troubles which are incident to that estate, *1 Cor.* 7. 28. So it is the Duty of married Persons, not only to Cohabite, but also to carry themselves cheerfully

fully one toward another, and especially the Husband should be exemplary in this, to prevent that Discouragement which the weaker Vessel is apt to fall into. Therefore Solomon here presses upon the Husband, that which is also proportionally the Duty of the Wife, *Live joyfully with the Wife whom thou lovest.*

11. The Love of the Husband to the Wife, and consequently of her to him, is so suitable to the Light of Nature, and so expressly commanded in the Word of God, that there should not be great need to press it much upon any Christian, that hath any thing of the Knowledge, or Fear of God: For Solomon here supposes, and takes for granted, that Love is not wanting, only he presses the effect or proof of it, cheerful conversing together, *Live joyfully with the Wife whom thou lovest.*

12. There is no time of Life wherein this Duty of Love, and cheerful conversing together, doth not oblige married Persons, especially the Husband, who should preceed in it, neither Age, Infirmity, decay of Beauty, Strength, nor the want of any other thing, which possibly was the first attractive of his Affection, should mar his Love, and cheerful conversing with his Wife in the Fear of the Lord. Therefore (saith he) *Live joyfully with the Wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy Vanity.*

13. As Men in the midst of their most comfortable Enjoyments which they have in this World, should have frequent thoughts of the shortness of their Life, and the Comforts of it, that so they may use these things as if they used them not, and as being shortly to leave them: So the consideration of the Vanity and Shortness of their Life, and of the Miseries incident to it, though it should not provoke them to excess of sensual Delights, as it doth Epicures, 1 Cor. 15. 32. yet it should incite them to a more cheerful use of these Comforts, that being their time is short, they may have the more strength and encouragement to serve the Lord cheerfully: For while Solomon is pressing upon Men a cheerful and free use of outward

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Comforts, he minds them twice of the *Vanity* of their Life, which, in the midst of these things, they are ready to forget, and makes the same a Reason pressing the cheerful use of their Allowance, *All the days of the life of thy Vanity which he hath given thee under the Sun, all the days of thy Vanity.*

14. When we think upon the Vanity of this Life, we should consider the same as carved out to us by the Lord to humble us in the sense of our Sinfulness, to wear our Hearts from it, and make us the more thankful for any Comfort we have in it: For speaking of Man's *Vain Days*, he calls them, *The Days which God hath given.*

15. Though the Children of the Lord should think the best of their earthly Enjoyments unworthy to be their satisfying Portion, Ps. 73. 25. 26. and should esteem them all miserable who have no better, Ps. 17. 14. yet are they to look upon their outward Comforts, such as Meat, Drink, Cloathing, and any comfortable Society with those of their Relations, as a sufficient temporary Reward of all their lawful pains about things worldly, they should thank God that suffers not even their Labour of that sort to go unrewarded, and should not repine, or mar their own Comfort by Discontentment, because they have not a greater measure of these things: For this is the last Reason of the Cheerfulness which he presses, *That is thy Portion* (not their best, but their temporal Portion, or Reward of their Pains in the duties of their lawful Callings) *in this Life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the Sun.*

Ver. 10: *whatsoever thy Hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest.*

THe Preacher giveth here a second Direction for making the Life of the Godly comfortable unto them, and for
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their right improving of the Comforts of it mentioned in the former, namely, that Men should vigorously prosecute the duties of their Calling in the due season thereof, *Whatsoever thy Hand finds to do, (saith he) do it with thy might.* He doth not hereby proclaim Licence to Men to do any thing that is in their power, seeing Men have often power and opportunity to act the greatest Impieties, *Mat. 2. 1.* But the meaning is, that the outmost of that Ability which God gives, especially the strength and comfort which is received by the use of his Benefits, should be put forth in the vigorous going about of the Duties of our particular Stations, in the season and opportunity thereof. And this he presseth by a Reason, *For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the Grave. &c.* which is not to be understood as if there were an end of Men at Death, as there is of the Beasts, but the meaning is, that in the state of separation of the Soul from the Body, there is no plotting, nor acting for the Honour of God, or promoting of our own Happiness, as now there is: And seeing every Man is *Passing* (as the last Word in the Verse signifies) toward that State, therefore he should improve all his Strength, and the Comforts of this Life, for encouragement in his Duty.

Hence Learn 1. The Lord's Liberality to Man, manifested in the variety of the outward Comforts of this Life, should be improved for making him serious and diligent in the duties of his Calling, watching every opportunity thereof, and laying out all the strength and cheerfulness of Spirit, which he hath acquired by the good things of God, in doing him Service, else *his Table is a Snare* to him, and his Comforts are turned into Curses: For this is inferred upon the former large Allowance of God, which he prest Men to make use of cheerfully, *Whatsoever thy Hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

2. Men have often both opportunity and power of doing Good, which they thro' neglect and carelessness are ready to let slip, which is a very bad return to God for his Liberality:

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Therefore the Spirit of God finds it necessary to stir Men up to take hold of every opportunity of Duty, as a proof of their thankfulness to God for his Bounty, *Whatsoever thy Hand finds to do, do it, &c.*

3. The utmost of our Ability is to be shewn in the discharge of every commanded Duty, considering what is the hazard of negligent doing the Work of the Lord, *Jer. 42. 10.* and that the more Fervent, Serious and Vigorous we are in walking in the Ways of the Lord, the more our Strength will grow. *Prov. 10. 29.* Therefore, (saith he) *Do it with thy might,*

4. As the opportunity of these Duties whereby we Honour God, and promote our own and others Salvation, is confined within the bounds of this Life; so the consideration hereof should make Men sharpen their Wit in Plotting ways of Honouring God, and doing good to their own Souls and others, and put forth the utmost of their Abilities for these Ends; For he gives this as a Reason of Mens seriousness and diligence in their Duty, while they have opportunity. That, *There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave.*

5. Every Man is in a continual Journey towards his long Home, whether he walk or rest, he is still *Passing* thither, and should so look upon himself, and thereby be moved to employ his time and strength to the utmost, in Honouring God, and working out his own Salvation in Fear and Trembling. For so he speaks of every Man, as in a constant motion toward his Grave. *There is no work, nor device, &c. in the Grave; whither thou goest, or (as the Word may be Translated) whither thou hasteth.*

Ver. 11. *I returned and saw under the Sun, that the Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battle to the Strong, neither yet Bread to the Wise, nor yet Riches to Men of Understanding, nor yet Favour to Men of Skill, but Time and Chance happeneth to them all.*

12. *For also Man knoweth not his time, as the Fishes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the Snare: so are the Sons of Men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.*

Lest Men may presume too much of Success in these Undertakings, which they set about *with all their might*, according to the direction in the former verse, and meeting with disappointment may be the more vexed; The Preacher doth in the *Third* place teach us humbly to depend upon God for success, and to deny our own Abilities and preparations, which seem to promise it to us.

And this he sets out *First*, by shewing how serious he was in the Observation of disappointments frequent among Men, *Returned and saw under the Sun*, He speaks of the motion of his mind in terms borrowed from the motions of the Body, he drew his thoughts a little from other considerations formerly mentioned, and applied them to the frequent disappointments which men meet with in the carriage of their Affairs.

Next, He giveth five instances of these disappointments which he had observed befalling men best fitted for success, which instances though they have a truth very remarkable in themselves, yet they are only to be looked upon as serving to lead us to all other things of that sort, that by these most remarkable instances of mens disappointments in their civil and common Affairs, we may be led to the truth he is upon as verified in things of a higher concernment, more immediately relating to the Salvation of mens Souls, such as the Apostle speaks of while he saith, *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy.* Rom. 9. 16. And again, *neither is he that planteth, any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth increase.* 1 Cor. 3. 7. nor are these instances to be taken as if the Race were *Never* to the swift, nor the Bat-

tel at any time to the strong &c. seing experince shews the contrary, and Scripture also, *Iohn* 20, 4. & *Sam.* 13. 14. but the meaning is, that there are frequent proofs of these, that men with most promising qualifications fall short of desired success, yea even of things necessary for the sustenance of their natural life, so that often their witt cannot so much as get them bread, that so they may be taught Dependence upon a Superiour, overruling providence, which must concur with a Blessing, else their greatest endeavours, and promising appearances of success, will fall short of the desired and intended effect.

Thirdly, He gives a twofold cause of these disappointments. The *One* is *without* Man, to wit, the secret powerful providence of God, For (saith he) *time and chance happeneth to them all*, the *Time* here spoken of is the fittest opportunity for Mens Actions, which is fixed as the word signifies, in the decree and foreknowledge of God. And that which is called *Chance* happening to men, is not to be taken as if any thing fell out which is not foreseen and foreordained by the Lord, but he speaks of these occurrences of providence which (as the word translated elsewhere *1 King.* 5. 4) touch men, or *Beat* upon them (as the word signifies) and so may mind them of a Superiour hand overruling them, and their actions. Now this as a cause of disappointment is not to be understood as if men were therefore disappointed, because God hath predetermined events and the time of them, but because Men do not acknowledge and humbly depend upon him who hath fixed all Events and the seasons of them, that they might know their Duty, and the season thereof, as the following words make clear, therefore they are disappointed. The *Second* Cause is *within* Man, and that is his ignorance of the fit season of his acting which he might know by consulting the word and Spirit of God, but he neglecting this, fights and runs, and Enterprises many things out of the due season, and so finds no success.

Fourthly, He doth illustrate the sad consequences of men not

considering the time, and not depending upon God in their Actings, by two similituds, of Birds and Fishes, whose simplicity easily insnares them, and applies the same to men who are surprized by sad occurrences of providence, for want of humble dependence upon God, and for acting out of the due season thereof.

From this purpose we may Learn, 1. Experimental knowledge is not attained but by frequent and serious observing of the various Events that fall out under the Sun, and considering of the causes and consequences of them: For so did Solomon attain to this knowledge, *I returned (saith he) and saw under the Sun, &c.*

2. When Men have their hearts applied to their work and have qualifications for it, which may probably produce the desired effect, they are then very apt to forget dependence upon God, to promise to themselves certain success of their undertakings, and never to look higher than second Causes, the qualifications and means which they have: For having exhorted in the former words to follow duty vigorously, he meets here with men who having done so as they think, are promising success to themselves without dependence upon Gods providence, and sees it fitting to mind them that they may look for disappointment, *The Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong, &c.*

3. Men may be qualified with these things that are most promising of success, and may imploy all their strength for attaining it, and yet be disappointed, while the Lord withholds his assistance, to correct them for want of Dependence upon, and acknowledgement of him, and to convince them that their ways are not in their own hand: For this is it which Solomon saith he observed, and holds out as useful to teach all men Self-denial in reference to their preparations and qualifications for their undertakings, and humble Dependence upon God for his

concurrence with them; *The Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong, nor Bread to the Wise. &c.*

4. The Lord exerciseth men to whom he hath given the best qualifications for their undertakings, with variety of disappointments, sometimes in matters of greater concernment sometimes in lesser, he will let them see that not only their strength cannot gain the day, or the victory in Battel, but all their wit cannot gain them a morsel of Bread, nor can all their skill gain them any respect in the World when his providence doth not favour them, Therefore doth he instance many disappointments, and these in greater and lesser matters, *The Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong, nor Bread to the Wise, &c.*

5. The disappointments which we observe men of greatest activity and best qualification for their undertakings, do meet with, should not weaken the hands of those who have less strength, and fewer qualifications in following their Duty, men should esteem themselves successful, if they be inabled for their Duty, and should comfort themselves in this, that their obedience shall be rewarded, though not with present success, yet with Gods approbation, and reward afterward: For after he hath in the former verse exhorted men to set to their duty with all their might be it less or more, he gives here several instances of several disappointments incident to Men who have most strength and other qualifications most promising of success, that they who want these, which others have had who yet have been disappointed, may not desert their duty, but may learn the more humble dependence upon God, *The Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong, &c.*

6. Though none have ground to expect success, who use not the outmost of lawful Diligence, and are not in some measure qualified for their undertakings, yet often it falls out that these who have greatest success are far inferiour to others, for these qualifications which seem most to promise the same: And this is so ordered by the Lord that none of his people may desert
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any duty he calls them to, how small appearance of success so ever they have, the Slow must run the Race that he hath set before them, and the Weak must to the warfare which he calls them to, in hope of success, though they be not qualified as they ought; For while he saith, *The Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong, &c.* He doth import, that the Race is sometimes to the Slow, and the victory to the Weak &c. especially if they follow Duty honestly, and with all their might according to the former direction.

7. The success of Mens Enterprizes is not to be attributed to the qualifications that fit them for these. but to the favourable concurrence of divine Providence. For therefore Solomon doth instance the disappointments of those who have had the best qualifications, that when the Swift get the Race, and the Strong carry the day in Battel &c. They may attribute their success to divine concurrence, *The Race is not to the Swift, nor the Battel to the Strong.*

8. The Lord hath all Events carved out, and the very Minute wherein they are to fall out, fixed in his eternal decree, and no mans power or wit, can alter any of these, For (saith he) *Time and Chance* (whereby are meant all Events; and the Minute of their falling out) *happen to them all*, or, as the word is, *touches them all*, namely as he hath *Foreordained*.

9. The consideration of a providence *predetermining* what shall be, and in what season, should not marr us in our Duty, but teach us humble Dependence upon, and acknowledgment of him who hath all in his hand, without which not only are disappointments frequent, but in displeasure also, for this is a reason of mans disappointment, not simply (as was explained before) but because he doth not depend upon and acknowledge God, who would either time his indeavours, so as they should tryt with his time set for success, or otherwise would sanctify the disappointments which he hath appointed him to meet with, *Time and Chance happeneth to all, Man also knows not his time.*

10. Beside the qualifications which are fitting for attaining to such and such effects, as Swiftneſs for the Race, and Strength for the war, &c. there is also neceſſary a right diſcerning of the opportunity fit for theſe undertakings, which by the ſanctified Exercise of humane prudence, following the general rules of the word, may be in ſuch meaſure attained to as men may have peace, and confidence of acceptation: And it is men not ſtudying to know theſe times even ſo far as they may be known which is often the cauſe of their Diſappointment, and running themſelves in many Snares: For it is here given as another cauſe of theſe Diſappointments formerly mentioned, and of the Snares and Inconveniencies ſpoken of afterward, *Man alſo knows not his time.*

11. Even thoſe who have all other Advantages for attaining to Succeſs, if they want humble dependence upon God's Providence, and do not ſeek his Direction to Time their Actions right, they cannot but expect to be ſurprized with Snares, ſeing they conſider not that there is a Supreme Providence over them, as the Birds and Fiſhes conſider not that there is a wiſer Creature than themſelves to enſnare them, they are often moſt ſecure when the Hazard is neareſt, as the Birds or Fiſhes are, and have greateſt hopes of Satisfaction, when they are neareſt their own ruine. and being taken in the Snare by Providence, are held the faſter the more they wreſtle to get out, till they learn to acknowledge and ſubmit to the Lord. For ſo much is imported in theſe Similitudes, *As the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are in the Snares, ſo are the Sons of Men enſnared in an evil Time, when it cometh ſuddenly upon them.*

12. Men that walk not with dependence upon God, laying their account for all Hazards and Trials. wherewith they may be exerciſed, and reſolving to ſubmit to all Inconveniencies, are ſtill ſurprized with all their Croſſes; And times of Diſappointment which prove good to the Godly, prove evil Times

to them; So are the Sons of Men snared in an evil Time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

Ver. 13. *This Wisdom have I seen also under the Sun, and it seemed great unto me.*

14. *There was a little City, and few Men within it, and there came a great King against it, and besieged it, and built great Butwarks against it.*

15. *Now there was found in it a poor wise Man, and he by his Wisdom delivered the City, yet no Man remembered that same poor Man.*

16. *Then said I, Wisdom is better than Strength: nevertheless the poor Mans Wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.*

Here is a Fourth Direction for remedy of that Discouragement, which is incident to the Godly in trouble, without which the former cannot be rightly made use of, and that is the study of Heavenly Wisdom: Without this our outward Comforts cannot be used aright, nor our diligence in Duty rightly put forth, nor can we know the time or season of any Duty. And this Solomon holds out in a Parable, or supposed History of the deliverance of a City from a very great Strait, by Wisdom, when other means were wanting.

And in this Four Things are considerable, *First*, the Wise Man's Preface to this Purpose, wherein he doth 1. Set down this effect of Wisdom as experimentally known to him, *This Wisdom* (saith he) *have I seen*, &c. It is not necessary hence to conclude, that the following Relation is any real History, though there be no hazard in looking upon the Words, as relating to some particular passage which Solomon had observed, seeing there was such an one in his Fathers time, 2 Sam. 20. 16. But it is sufficient to think that he had observed several Passages in his time, wherein this effect of Wisdom was verified.

2. He sets down the effect of his observation of this Wisdom, it did beget in his Heart a very high esteem of Wisdom, *it seemed great to me*, saith he.

Next, He sets down the supposed History or Parable wherein this effect of Wisdom did shine, and that is, of a *little City*, without Men or Means for defence of it, great Forces being raised against it, and many Assaults made, and yet one Man Poor and Mean as to other things, indued with this Wisdom, was instrumental to deliver the City. which is not brought in to perswade Men that every one indued with Heavenly Wisdom, will be made instrumental in the like visible Effects: But it is sufficient to commend the study of it to all, that it hath both been sometimes so blest, when other means have been wanting, and that if the Lord see a Delivery good for his People, the study of this Wisdom is the best way to obtain it, and that it hath alwayes the like effect in a Spiritual Sense, teaching them that are endued with it, the way of delivery from their Spiritual Enemies.

Thirdly, He doth in this same supposed History hold forth, the Intertainment that the truly Wise may expect in the World though they should be instrumental in bringing about the greatest outward Mercies to worldly Men, and that is to be slighted. *And no Man* (saith he) *Remembered the poor Man*.

Fourthly; He doth hence draw Two useful Conclusions. 1. That *Wisdom is better than Strength*, that is, it is sometimes more blest for bringing about even outward Deliverance, when external Strength is wanting, than all the Strength in the World without this Wisdom. 2. That if Men want other external things to recommend them to the World, they may resolve to be slighted, and have their inward Qualifications, such as Wisdom, misregarded by the most part of Men.

Hence Learn 1. The usefulness and excellency of that Wisdom which is from Above, is not only to be seen by the Reading and Hearing of the Word, but also by the observation of the Effects which

which the same is blest to produce, both to them that are indued with it, and to others, especially the comfortable support which comes by it under Straits, and the sweet way of escape and outgate, even when Men want probable outward means of Safety and Delivery: For it is this experimental sight of the excellency of this Wisdom in the effect of it, whereof Solomon here speaks, while he saith, *This Wisdom have I seen also.*

2. The greater measure of true Wisdom any have, the greater esteem they have of it, not only in themselves but in others, and even in these who are poor and mean, and having no other thing in the World to commend them, they magnify the appearances and effects of it where ever they see them: For Solomon who had a great measure of it, prized it highly, even in a poor Man, *This Wisdom have I seen under the Sun, and it seemed great to me.*

3. Where the Lord intends Delivery, he doth sometimes in the depth of his Wisdom, suffer such Straits to come, as Ruine seems near and unavoidable, that men may learn to deny their own Wit and Power, 2 Cor. 1. 9. and may esteem the more of a Delivery when it is brought about. *Pf. 126. 1. &c.* For here in this supposed History or Parable, *There was a little City and few Men within it, and there came a great King and besieged it, and built great Bulwarks against it, whereby the Ruine of it was apparent, and yet Deliverance is a preparing, and working for it.*

4. Those who have no external means of Defence or Delivery equal to the power employed against them, ought not to despair of a Delivery, nor think it impossible. but still leave room to God to find out the way, though they do not see it; Neither ought these whose external force and power do far exceed their Adversaries, and have improven the same successfully, even to the almost gaining of their point, promise certain success to themselves: For here *The little City and few Men are preserved, and the Great King who raised great Bulwarks against it, hath not the desired success: For the City is delivered.*

5. The Lord doth often bestow the most excellent Gifts of the Mind, upon those who have least of outward Gifts, such as Riches, Honour, and the like, that all may know he doth not value these outward Qualifications, as he doth the inward, which the World undervalueth, and that these inward Gifts may be seen to be his, and freely bestowed, when they are given to persons who have so little of outward things that might help or encourage in the acquiring of them: For here in this City, *There was found a poor Wise Man.*

6. As the Lord doth sometimes make the rise of a Peoples Delivery to be from that Airth whence they least expected it; so when he intends a Delivery to a Community where he hath some of his own, he doth ordinarily make some of those instrumental in the bringing of it about, either by moving them to Pray for it, and so giving it in answer to their Prayers, *Dan. 9. 2, 3.* &c. or by suggesting to them the best Course for it, and blessing their Endeavours for obtaining of it, *2 Sam. 20. 22.* So that it should be thought a great Advantage to have but one truly Godly Person in a Society, seeing where any such are, if a Delivery be possible, the Lord rather Honours them than others, to be instrumental in bringing it about: For here *The poor Man by his Wisdom delivered the City.*

7. Although the truly Godly be often little obliged to those they live among, for any respect or encouragement they have from them, yet is it their Duty, and it is also their Disposition, to imploy any Witt they have for the good of those among whom they are, for preventing their ruine, that they may have time to Repent and reform their Ways: For this *Poor Wise Man* hath had little incouragement from his fellow Citizens, as appears by what is spoken of their After-carriage to him in this supposed History, and yet he imployes his Witt for obtaining a Delivery to them, *The poor Man by his Wisdom delivered the City.*

8. So little do worldly Men discern the Beauty of God's Grace in his People, so highly do they esteem of outward things, Riches, Honour, and the like, and so great is their enmity against the Godly, that though they have tasted of the sweet Fruits of their Wisdom and other Perfections, they cannot but slight them, and the Godly must resolve for such a Lot, and learn to draw their encouragement from the Lord's Approbation of them for following of their Duty: For he forewarns here, that if a Godly Man do a good Turn to the ingrate World, he will readily get little Thanks for his pains, *Na Man remembered the poor Man.*

9. It is not enough to remark the Passages of God's Providence which we behold, but we ought to learn something from them that may be of general use to our selves and others, and to take opportunity according to our Calling, to communicat the same to others for their Good: For so doth *Solomon* here Comment upon the present Passage set forth in this Parable, and draws Conclusions from it for the use of the Church, *Then said I, Wisdom is better than Strength.*

10. Those who are indued with true Wisdom to know the Mind of God from his Word, and a right Carriage under Straits, though deprived of outward Means of Defence or Delivery from Straits, are in a much more desirable Condition, than those who have never so much external Strength without that Wisdom: For they who have outward Strength without this Wisdom, cannot but trust in it, and so provoke the Lord either to Blast it, and make it ineffectual as to the obtaining of Delivery, or if they do obtain it, it be in Wrath to them, while as they who have this Wisdom without that strength, are thereby led to make use of the Strength of the Lord which is engaged to do for them in Straits, they are thereby kept from sinful Courses for Delivery, and made to submit to Disappointments, if God see it fit to exercise them therewith: For though this Commendation of Wisdom may be true of common

Humane Prudence, which sometimes proves Better than never so much outward strength without it, yet it is safest to take it for a Commendation of the exercise of sanctified Reason, which is nothing else but Saving Knowledge, applied (it may be) to the common matters of this Life, *Wisdom is better than Strength.*

11. As it is a high Provocation of the Lord to look no higher than the Instruments of our Delivery, and to put them in God's place, *Act. 14. 13.* So it is no less a Provocation to slight Instruments; and not (for his sake) to honour and encourage the Person whom he honours to do us good, or to despise God's Gifts in them, because they want outward Gifts: For in testimony of the Lord's taking notice of their slighting the poor Man and his Wisdom, it is twice set down, once in the History, and again in Solomon's Observations upon it, *No Man remembered the poor Man, and the poor Man's Wisdom is despised.*

12. That which makes the wholesome Counsel and Advice of the Godly to be slighted by the Men of this World, is, their undervaluing of their Persons, so as they give not a hearing to their words: If the worth and utility of what even some of the poorer sort of them may hold out, were pondered, their Gifts would make way for them: For the latter Clause may be looked upon as the cause of the former, *The poor Man's Wisdom is despised, why? his words are not heard.*

Ver. 17. The words of Wise Men are heard in quiet, more than the Cry of him that ruleth among Fools.

13. *Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one Sinnet destroyeth much good.*

HAVING shewn the usefulness of Heavenly Wisdom, and the bad Intertainment it hath in the World, under the former supposed History. He doth here *First* incourage the Godly to be ready to communicate their Knowledge and Coun-
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fel for the good of others, by shewing that success will not be always wanting, *The words of the Wise* (saith he) *are heard in quiet*, which may be understood 1. As pointing at the Lot of the Godly, who would communicat the truth to others, they must often deliver the same very quietly, they will not always get so publick a Hearing as the Truth deserves, by reason of the corruption of Times, and wicked Humours of People. 2. It may be taken as holding out the qualification of them that would do good to others, and get a Hearing to the Truth; they must in a sober and calm manner, without Clamour, Contention, or Ostentation deliver it, and so God will get it a hearing with some. 3. It may be taken for a description of the right disposition of Hearers of the Truth, they must be of Quiet, Calm, Humble and Meek Spirits. Because these do all agree, and the Speech is indefinit, it may be looked upon as comprehending them all, holding this in the general, that it is an encouragement to the Wise to communicat their Knowledge, by promising success to them; for the Hebrews express a Promise by way of Enunciation in the present time: And this Promise of Success he illustrates, by comparing the same with that Success which other Mens words have, even suppose them to be Rulers, while he saith, *More than the Cry of him that ruleth among Fools*, the opposition shews that the Ruler here spoken of is to be looked upon as destitute of this Saving Wisdom, and so like his foolish Subjects among whom he Rules: So the meaning seems to be, that the Truth of God, or the meek Counsels of the Godly, however despised by the most part of Men, shall gain acceptance with peaceable and humble Souls, even when he same may not be avowed publickly, more than the most publick Edicts of wicked Rulers shall have with the generality of their foolish Subjects.

Next, That all may be moved to entertain the Counsel or Advice of the truly Wise, be they never so poor and mean in the World; he doth again commend Heavenly Wisdom, as more

more useful, especially in a Strait, to which the former supposed History relates, than all external means of Defence without it: He did before prefer it to Strength, now to the Means or *Instruments of War*, which Strength makes use of, in so far as it teaches Men to depend upon God and make use of his Strength: and this he illustrates by pointing out the Damage which *one Sinner*, or a few (for *one* is sometimes put for *a few*) may bring to the whole Society where they are tolerated, as he shewed before, that one poor Wise Man, by whom is meant a Godly Man, delivered the City: So here that *one Sinner*, by whom is meant (as is clear by the opposition) any one destitute of Saving Knowledge, and a Ring-leader in Wickedness, may marr the Delivery of a whole Society from danger, and consequently bring Ruine upon it, especially when such an one is Countenanced and Preferred: And this is also to be understood from the opposition of this one Sinner to the *Poor Wise Man*, who was Despised, Slighted, and his Words not regarded.

From this we may Learn 1. When the Truth of God cannot get a publick Hearing in the World, the Lord will get acceptance to it, and will be doing good by it in private Corners, and so will be still propagating his Truth, as he did by his Apostles and Prophets in evil Times, when they might not avow themselves; in which sense this general Speech is verified, *The words of the Wise are heard in quiet.*

2. It is not a clamorous, hot, and violent way of pressing even Truth it self, that will gain Acceptance to it, nor will that way be studied by them that are truly Wise, and desire to spread the Truth, but rather it is that quiet and calm way of delivering of it, which Christ himself used, who did not strive nor cry, nor cause his Voice to be heard in the Streets, that prevails most: The Lord will have it so, that the efficacy and fruit of speaking the Truth, may be seen to be his secret power with it, and the Beauty and Equity of the thing spoken

spoken, rather than any thing it hath from the Speaker: For so may this also be taken, as pointing out the qualification necessary for the right way of delivering the Truth, *The words of the Wise are heard in quiet.*

3. Those who are of Composed, Meek and Humble Spirits, ready to submit to the Mind of God, when it is held forth, and not to gain-say it in their Hearts, when it speaks most sharply against their Corruptions, those are fit to receive the Truth of God, such will hear it and profit by it, when others deny it a Hearing, and will take well with a savoury Counsel and Advice from others, were they never so poor and mean: For having said before, that the poor Man's words were despised and not heard, to wit by the most part of Men, he adds this, that notwithstanding, *The words of the Wise are heard in quiet*, namely by Quiet, Calm and Submissive Spirits.

4. When Men that have Rule over others do not hear the Truth of God themselves, though spoken by the poorest and meanest Servants of his, and do not imploy their power to propagate the knowledge of it, and gain respect to it among their Subjects, but suffer them to remain ignorant of God, and so Fools indeed for any care or pains they take to make them wise, it is but just with God to make their most imperious and publick Commands have little respect with their Subjects, and less than they give to his Counsel coming from his despised Messengers, yea to raise up some to speak against their wicked Edicts at least in *Quiet*, when his Truth may not be avowed, and make those to be better heard than wicked Rulers are: And so verily this, *That the words of the Wise are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that Ruleth among Fools.*

5. So much are the Hearts of Men taken up with external Force and means of Defence, when they have them, and so hardly are they then made apprehensive of the necessity of humble Dependence upon God for his Concurrence, which Heavenly Wisdom teaches, that the Ministers of Christ having to do

do with such, had great need frequently to undervalue all their external Force without that Wisdom, and to prefer the same to all external Means where it is wanting: Therefore Solomon having thus commended Wisdom before, Ver. 16. he here commends it again in an Expression near to the former, *Wisdom is better than weapons of War.*

6. Some one, or a few wicked Persons, especially when they are tolerat, countenanced, or followed in their evil Counsells and Ways; *Judg. 19. 22. &c. and 20. 14. &c.* or when the Sin of that one or few, is not searched and mourned for, *Josh. 7. 13.* may deprive the whole Society, who have so made the guilt of that one or few their own, of many excellent Mercies, such as delivery from Straits, or may procure the removal of Mercies which they do all enjoy, and consequently may draw on great Judgements upon the whole Society: And so this is verified, *One Sinner destroyeth much good.*

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The ARGUMENT.

THE Wise Man having spoken so much in the Commendation of Saving Wisdom, he doth in the First part of this Chapter unto ver. 4. adduce many pressing Arguments perswading to the serious Exercise of it, and manifestation thereof in their Conversation. The 1. whereof is because a very small Mis carriage in these who have gained Esteem with others for Wisdom and other Qualifications and advantages, will readily (as a dead Flie falling among Oynments) render them useless and unsavoury ver. 1. The 11 Argument is taken from the description of those that are made Partakers of this Heavenly Wisdom, and of those who are void of it; because these who are indued with this Saving Wisdom, are in a fit and ready Disposition to go seasonably, dexterously, and diligently about their Duty (having their Heart in their right Hand) ver. 2. And they that are void of it, as they are unfit for any duty or work in the season thereof, so do they palpably bewray to On-lookers in their deportments, their folly and want of Heart and Courage for Duty, especially under Difficulties ver. 2, 3.

In the second Part of this Chapter contained from ver. 4. to the end of the Chapter, are set down several Directions, in order to the manifesting of this Saving Wisdom in their carriage particularly towards Magistrats (especially when unjustly provoked) The 1. whereof is, That when the Magistrat is unjustly incensed, they would evidence spiritual Wisdom by a peaceable yielding and mild carriage (so far as is consistent with duty to God and a good Conscience) towards them, even tho there may be many things wrong in their Administrations, which is the ready way (through the Blessing of God) to pacifie and calm the Passions of them that are in Authority, and prevent much Evil both in the Magistrats and Subjects. ver. 4. Which Direction he illustrates, 1. By holding forth the ordinary abuse of Government, through the pravity of the disposition of some Rulers, which in his Observation or Revelation from the Spirit of God, had been improv'd to the setting of the vilest and worst of Men in eminent place, and wisest of Men not only with-held from publick Employment, but put in an abject and despicable condition. ver. 5, 6, & 7. 2. By shewing the sinfulness and danger of seditious Plottings and Insurrections against those in Lawful Authority, as being a malicious course evidently tending to their own Ruine. ver. 8, 9. The 11. Direction is, That Men endued with saving Knowledge, who providentially are under such incensed and corrupt Rulers, as advance the Wicked, and depress the Godly, would be at double pains (especi-

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ally in case of former Mistakes or Negligence, for Direction how to carry ro-
 wards them, both in speech and practice, and give both God and them their due,
 which only can be attained by that Wisdom which is from Above, and shines e-
 minently in the Word of God. ver. 10. The necessity of which Wisdom for this end
 he evidenceth. 1. From the evil and danger of railing and reproachful Speeches,
 incident to Men destitute of saving Wisdom, against incensed and corrupt Rulers
 when they meet with any violence or disappointment of their ambitious Ends
 from them, they thereby readily procuring their own Ruine (as a Serpent by
 his audible hissing doth his killing) from those whom by his detraiting Speeches
 he provokes. ver. 11. 2. From the advantage of having this heavenly Wisdom,
 which directeth a Man to the use of such savoury Words and Expressions, as
 conciliates the favour of offended Rulers. ver. 12. 3. From the sad and dan-
 gerous effects of such rash and detraiting Speeches towards these in Authority,
 as proving the Mean of a Mans insnaring and destroying himself. ver. 12.
 4. From the height and extremity that such hard Speeches do ordinarily run to,
 that as they begin with, and flow from Levity and Inconstancy, so they ter-
 minat in mad and furious Courses against these Rulers. ver. 13. And 5.
 From the description of such Men destitute of this saving Knowledge of God,
 and their Duty to them in Authority, by resembling them unto the Natural
 Fools of the World in the multiplying of Words, by boasting of their intended
 Actions, and inquiring into, and determining future Events. ver. 14. And
 in the vanity and fruitlessness of their Endeavours, even in common and very
 ordinary Affairs. ver. 15. And upon the mentioning of the Grievances of
 the Godly, under the bad Government of corrupt Rulers, and their Duty to
 wards them, Notwithstanding thereof, The Preacher takes occasion, 1. To
 shew the misery of that Land who have voluptuous and unqualified Rulers,
 both Supreme and Inferior set over them. ver. 16. 2. The happiness of that
 Nation or People, over whom eminently qualified and sober Governours are
 set. ver. 17. And 3. The Cause or Root of that Ruine that comes upon a
 Land under wicked and insufficient Rulers, to be their exceeding Sloathful-
 nels and Carelessness (as a Man that suffereth his House to decay through
 neglect to repair it) in using fit Means to save the State from Ruine and
 Destruction. ver. 18. And their Luxury and excessive and unseasonable Use
 of worldly Enjoyments, to the enhancing of Money to spend upon their
 Lusts, and impoverishing of their Subjects. ver. 19. The III. and last Di-
 rection is, That notwithstanding People may meet with many Grievances
 from vicious and insufficient Rulers, apt to stir the passions even of the Best;
 yet they ought to forbear all bitterness of Spirit; and revengeful Imprecations
 of Vengeance upon them, and to entertain no malicious Thoughts against their
 Persons or Authority. ver. 20. which he presseth by an Argument taken from
 the sudden and unexpected Discovery of this, either in time, to the confusion
 and punishment of the Offender, or hereafter before Angels and Men, to
 their eternal Shame and Destruction. ver. 20.

C H A P. X.

Ver. 1. *Dead flies cause the Oyntment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking Savour: so doth a little Folly him that is in Reputation for Wisdom and Honour.*

Solomon having at large commended saving knowledge or Christian prudence, he doth now press the exercise thereof, and shew how it should be manifested in a Christians Conversation, and before he give directions for this end, he labours to prepare the heart for receiving of them, by informing those who have gained esteem in the minds of others for Wisdom, or any other gift they have therewith, such as *Riches* or *Eloquence* (as the word translated *Honour* signifies) that they had great need to be very accurat and circumspect in their walking: And this he doth by representing the hazard of the miscarriage of such, though it were but in some small point of rashness or inconsideration which he calls *a little Folly*, manifested by them and marked by others in their carriage, this will render them altogether useles, for doing good to others and make all the rest of their carriage unfavoury: And this hazard he illustrats by a similitude well known to the people among whom he lived, of a *dead Flie*, which falling into the *Oyntment* of the Apothecary, doth readily putrify the same and make it useles and unfavoury. So the verse may be taken for an Argument to study the constant exercise and manifesting of Heavenly Wisdom in the conversation, because even a small miscarriage in them that are esteemed truly wise, will make them very unfavoury.

Hence Learn. 1. Though it be the ordinary lot of those who are truly Wise and Godly to be in a mean obscure and despis'd condition in the World, as he had shewn toward the

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close

close of the former Chapter, yet it is not always so with all of them, for sometimes the Lord gives them with saving Wisdom such other things as ule to be most in esteem with the World, that they may thereby be the fitter for promoting his Honour. And as he favours them himself, so sometimes he gains them favour and Reputation with men, yea even the worst of men *Mark. 6. 20.* So much doth *Solomon* suppose here, for there is no ground to think that he speaks of such as have only an undeserved Reputation, but of such as have and deserve to have Reputation for Wisdom and Honour.

2. The more esteem and Reputation especially for Wisdom any have among Men, the greater hazard are they in to bewray their folly and rashness, either by being lifted up above measure *2 Cor. 12. 7.* by despising others *Mat. 20. 24.* or upon the conceit of their own eminency in that or any other perfection waxing presumptuous and fearless of their own miscarriage *Mat. 26. 33. 69.* And so have often greater need to be warned of their hazard to miscarry, than these who are in less esteem for Wisdom: For the Spirit of God directed *Solomon* in the close of the former Chapter to commend and encourage the poor despised Wise man, but here he directs him to guard the Wise man who hath Reputation and Honour, by insinuating his hazard to Miscarry, while he saith, *Dead Flies cause the Oynment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in Reputation for Wisdom and Honour.*

3. As those that deserve Reputation and esteem from others ought not ambitiously to hunt after it. *Gal. 5. 26.* nor be much moved when they want it. *1 Cor 4. 3.* So their having of it should make them the more exact in their walk and cautious lest any thing escape them that may make their name unfavoury: They should make their esteem and Reputation among men an Argument to move their own hearts to study Accuracy and tenderness in their behaviour for keeping up their esteem, that so they may be in the fitter capacity to Honour the Lord, and

do good to others. For to stir up such to walk futable to their esteem, is this hazard of their miscarriage, and coming in disgrace thereby set forth to them, as *Dead Flies cause the Oynment &c. so doth a litle folly &c.*

4 The greater measure of esteem and Reputation for Wisdom, and other gifts of God men have attained unto, the more easily is their Reputation stained even by the smallest miscarriage discernable in them. They have the eyes of Envy fixt upon them. *1 Sam. 18. 9.* those who have been silenced by their blameless behaviour, will readily speak much against them, when they manifest but a little Folly *1 Tim. 5. 14. 1 Pet. 2. 15.* And the more straight their former carriage hath been the more remarkable will the least impertinency or rashness in their future carriage be, as a small blemish is easily discerned in a face that hath always appeared beautiful. The consideration whereof should stir up such to walk the more circumspectly; whereunto Solomon here by this Argument doth excite them, *a litle Folly makes them unsavoury and useles who have been in Reputation for Wisdom and Honour.*

5. So spiritual should the minds of Christians be, especially the Lords publick Servants, that they should make some spiritual use of these things which are of most common use among men, and so should be ready to illustrate and commend truth and duty to others, by these things which may be their daily remembrancers. For so doth Solomon here, *Dead Flies cause the Oynment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, so doth a litle. &c.*

6. As the untainted Reputation of a Wise Christian makes him very savoury, and his carriage and Counsels wholesome and medicinal to others with whom he converses, while he makes manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ, and by his example and instruction heals the distempers of those among whom he lives; So the miscarriage of such a man makes him so much the more noisome and unsavoury, as he hath been
be-

before savoury and useful, as is imported in this similitude and the application of it. There is nothing more wholesome and savoury than pretious Oyntment, while it is fresh, nothing less useful and more unsavoury, when it is corrupt. And so is it with those that have been in Reputation for Wisdom and Honour. While by their holy and circumspect walking, they keep their Reputation, they are very savoury and useful, but when even by a little Folly, and much more by their gross failings, they lose it, they become very noisome and unsavoury.

Ver. 2. *A Wise mans heart is at his right hand, but a Fools Heart is at his left.*

3. *Yea also when he that is a Fool walketh by the way, his Wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a Fool.*

THat the minds of Men may be yet more in love with the following directions concerning the manifesting of Heavenly Wisdom in their conversation; He doth here in the second place describe those that are indued with it, and those that are destitute of it, First, He describes the Godly, who are ordinarily designed by this name the *Wise*, in Solomons Writings, while he saith, *the Heart of the Wise is at his right hand*, He doth not speak of the situation or position of that material part of the Body which is called the *Heart*, and is in the same place in all Men, but of the inward frame and disposition of a Mans spirit in order to his acting. The man that hath saving Wisdom, his mind is present at his duty and fit to direct him how to go dexterously about it, in the opportunity thereof. And this he expresseth in a proverbial kind of speech, *his Heart is at his right hand*, because it is with the *Right* hand that Men ordinarily are readiest and swiftest in working. In a word, it is to be in a fit disposition for Duty, or, as *Pauls* expression is, prepared unto every good work in the season thereof.

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Next, He gives a description of the man destitute of this Heavenly Wisdom in two Branches, The *First* is, That he is unfit for every duty, *his Heart is at his left Hand*, he cannot go dexterously about his actions, and hath no Heart to act any thing aright. The *Second*, That he doth palpably discover his naughtiness to discerning Onlookers by his visible deportment *when he walks by the way*, that is, when he is about any duty Common or Religious, *his Wisdom*, or (as it is in the Original) his Heart *fails him*, he hath neither Wisdom, Strength nor Courage for his Duty, especially when he meets with difficulties in the way of it, *and he saith to every one that he is a Fool*, not as if he did in words express so much: For Solomon speaks nothing in this Book of natural Fools, or such as are destitute of the exercise of common Reason, but of persons void of saving Grace, how wise soever they seem to be otherwise, they are often left of God to bewray their Folly to spiritual Discerners.

Hence Learn. 1. In so far as Christians are indued with Heavenly Wisdom, and do improve the same, they will do nothing before they deliberate, and consult the word and Spirit of God concerning their actions both for the matter and manner of them, *Prov. 4. 26.* that they may discover and foresee temptations incident to them in following their Duty, to shun them, *Prov. 2. 10. 11.* and Hazards and inconveniences to eschew or prepare for them, *Luk. 14. 28.* they will watch the opportunity of their Duty, and keep themselves in a fit disposition for it, that they be not surprized therewith when it offers it self *1 Pet. 4. 7.* they will labour to keep these considerations, which may repel Temptations, & guard against discouragements *Psal. 119. 50. 95.* And will be often reflecting upon their actions for matter of Humiliation or Praise as they find them right or wrong, *Psal. 119. 59.* all which may be comprehended under this description of the truly Godly, *The heart of the Wise is at his right hand.*

2. Men

2. Men void of the saving knowledge and Grace of Christ cannot go dexterously about any Duty. For either when they purpose to do well, the *Right* hand of Execution is absent from the Heart, *Psal. 78. 37.* Or when they do what is right in it self, their Heart is as it were away from their Hand, *Isa. 29. 13.* And ordinarily their Hearts are wholly indisposed for, and averse from what is their Duty, and only inclined to act what is Siniftrous or Evil, as is imported in this description of the man void of saving Grace or knowledge, *The Heart of the Fool is at his left Hand.*

3. Though every mans heart be framed alike, and have the same position in the Body, yet Saving knowledge, and Grace, make so great a change upon the Heart where they are bestowed, as if the natural situation of it were changed. It now in some measure inclines toward that which is good in the sight of God. *Rom. 7. 22.* while as before it was only bent toward Evil, *Jer. 17. 9.* For to convince us of the vast difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate, he thus describes the one and the other. *The heart of the Wise is at his right hand, but the Heart of the Fool is at his left.*

4. However men void of Saving Knowledge and Grace, may hold on for a time in the way that is good and right in it self, especially while they have prosperity, applause and such encouragements, *John 5. 33.* yet when opposition and discouragements become frequent, they lose all the courage, strength and comfort, which sometimes they seemed to have: For (saith he) *when he that is a Fool walks by the way, his Wisdom (or as the word is his Heart) fails him,* the expression is ordinarily used of mens despondency and discouragement of spirit, because of opposition in their way.

5. As mens carriage and visible deportment hath a language, which may be heard and understood by the truly Wise with whom they converse, so however Hypocrites may long carry themselves so closely, that they shall not bewray their folly or wicked-

wickedness which is called *Folly* in the Book, *Psal.* 55. 14. yet it is just with God, and often he doth exercise that Justice in this Life, to leave such to discover what is in their Heart by their actions, see, *Prov.* 18. 2. and 6. 13. 20. For this description of the Fool, or the wicked man is not to be understood, as if all such did verbally proclaim themselves to be what they are: But that their unchristian and imprudent carriage in opposition to the way and will of God, though never so much Worldly wit and policy were manifested in it, doth often speak to the truly Wise, what they are, *yea also when he that is a Fool walks by the way his Wisdom fails him, and he saith to every one that he is a Fool*

Ver. 4. *If the spirit of the Ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.*

HE comes now to direct the Godly how to manifest that Heavenly Wisdom, or Christian prudence, formerly commended in their carriage, especially to Magistrates or Superiours provoked and that unjustly, as will appear by the following purpose.

In this verse there is considerable *First*, the case wherein he suppoles the Godly to be, and that is to be under the wrath and displeasure of those that are in Authority, *If (saith he) the spirit of the Ruler (or the Passion as the word sometimes signifies in Scripture Prov. 25. 28) rise against thee, or (as the word signifies) Ascend or swell, so as it seems there is Evil determined against thee.*

Next, there is the duty enjoined to the Godly in these words *leave not thy Place*, whereby is not meant that the Godly may not in any case flee from the fury of incensed Rulers: For *Solomon* knew that his Father had so done warrantably: But the meaning is that Christians should neither for the apparent displeasure of great men shake off their duty to God, it being every mans prime place and station to defend his honour, nor yet

due respect to the person and office of their Superiours, though unjustly incensed, this being a part of our duty to God.

Thirdly, There is the reason pressing this Duty, *for yeilding pacifieth great offences.* By *yeilding* is not meant obedience to mens sinful commands for fear of their displeasure, but a submissive humble carriage, ceding from our right in some things, and going along with them so far as we may with a good Conscience: Or it is the same with that which *Solomon* calls a *soft Answer*, *Prov. 15. 1.* or long forbearing, *Prov. 25. 15.* to act against them while there is hope of their being reclaimed, this may pacify their passions, and so prevent farther offences, which they are ready to commit against God, and greater hazard to our selves.

Hence Learn. 1. The favour of great Men is to be looked on as a very unconstant thing: And therefore no Man should trust in it, nor for the obtaining or keeping of it, adventure upon the displeasure of him with whom there is no variation nor shadow of turning. For it is supposed in the first expression of this verse, that the Spirit of the Ruler is now risen against them with whom he hath been lately well pleased, and in the last expression in the verse, it is imported, that his mind may be changed again to favour them *if the Spirit of the Ruler rise against thee, &c.*

2. Although the Godly be the most loyal Subjects of any in the World, yet they may resolve to lose the favour, and incur the displeasure of those in Authority, who often even though they be Gracious, expect too much of their Subjects, and would have them sealing all that they say: *2 Sam. 24. 2. 4.* And therefore Men should keep themselves in good terms with the supreme Magistrate who can restrain the Wrath of Princes and cut off their Spirits when they rise too high against his People *Psal. 76. 10. 12.* This is also imported in this supplication, *If the Spirit of the Ruler rise against thee.*

3. Men

3. Men so little consider Gods Greatness, Sovereignty and Terrour. *Isa. 51. 12. 13.* that they are in hazard when they see great Men incensed against them to be put from their duty, and either out of carnal fear to deny the truth *Mat. 26. 70.* Or out of pride and passion to shake off all Reverence to lawful Authority for every thing that displeases them. *1 Pet. 2. 13. 16.* Therefore the Spirit of God finds it here necessary to exhort the Godly to constancy in their Duty in such a Case. *If the Spirit of the Ruler rise against thee, leave not thy place.*

4. Though it be in some Cases lawful for the Godly to flee from the presence of Incensed Magistrates, yea out of their Dominions, and from the reach of their power, especially when they are not only unjustly incensed, but manifesting cruel Purposes against them, as is clear in the Case of *David* flying from *Saul*, and even of *Christ* himself, and his Apostles flying from one City to another, yet every appearance of hazard from such, ought not to be a ground of flying from them, while there is hope of reclaiming them from their evil way, or gaining their favour again: For it is here supposed that they may be pacified, and the party have some probability hereof, and in this Case it is commanded, *Leave not thy place.*

5. Whether it be lawful for Subjects to flee from the presence of their incensed Rulers, and from the reach of their Power, or not, they must never desert either the Duty which they owe immediatly to God, or such Duties, to their lawful Magistrates as are within the compalls of their Power and Calling, if it were but to pour out their secret Prayer to God for them: For this Direction may be taken in reference to that Duty which we owe to God, and of that also which we owe to Magistrates as a branch of Duty to him, abstracting from flying out of, or abiding in their Presence or Service. *If the Spirit of the Ruler rise against thee, leave not thy place,* namely that place which is properly and constantly the place of a Godly Man.

6. When Inferiours or Subjects have lost the favour of their Superiours or Magistrates, and are become the Objects of their Wrath and Fury, they must not despair of regaining their Favour; but should consider, that being they were so mutable and inconstant, as to change their Love into Hatred, when they ought not, they may again change their Displeasure into Favour, as they ought; so much is imported in this Reason, *For yeilding pacifieth great Offences.*

7. Though there must be no yeilding to the Greatest on Earth, in the Matters of God, *Exod. 10. 26. Dan. 4. 18. Act. 4. 19, 20.* yet yeilding, by passing from things of our own, or of an earthly Concernment, by a humble and sober Carriage, in silence passing by our personal Injuries for peace cause, is the Duty of every Christian: For this yeilding is the thing here spoken of, *Yeilding pacifies great Offences.*

8. This Yeilding formerly described useth to be blest of God, for calming the storm of Passion in those who are in Authority, more than the strongest Opposition that may be made to them, though under the Pretence of Zeal for God and the publick Good: For (saith he) *Yeilding pacifieth great Offences.*

9. While Mens Passions are raised, they are ready to run into high Provocations of God, and Injuries to others: And as Persons are greater than others in place and power, to ordinarily are the Offences they commit in their passion greater than these of others. So much is supposed while speaking of Rulers, he saith, *Yeilding pacifieth great Offences.*

10. The preventing of God's Dishonour, and prejudice to the Souls of them that are in passion against us, should rather move us to yeild to them for pacifying of them, than the fear of our own Hurt, or desire of Good to our selves by their Favour: For this is made an Argument for Yeilding, that it shall prevent the *Offence* or *Sin* (as the Word signifies) to wit, of the party in passion, *Yeilding pacifieth great Offences.*

11. Passion is a sickness of Spirit, putting Men in a rage, as they use to be in the height of a Fever, and they that can yeild to Men in passion for pacifying of them, are their best Physicians: For (saith he) *Yeilding pacifies* (the Word signifies to Heal as a Physician doth) *great Offences.*

Verse 5. *There is an Evil which I have seen under the Sun, as an Error which proceedeth from the Ruler.*

Verse 6. *Folly is set in great dignity, and the Rich sit in low place.*

Verse 7. *I have seen Servants upon horses, and Princes walking as Servants upon the earth.*

HAVING exhorted to Loyalty, even towards Magistrats unjustly Incensed, and to the manifestation of heavenly Wisdom, by a mild Yeilding, and peaceable Carriage toward them; He doth now discover and regrave the great and common Abuse of Government, as the prime Temptation moving Men to shake off Duty to their Superiours, to wit, Their preferring the unworthy, and slighting the better sort of Men.

And this he doth *First* set down as observed by himself, whether by his own experience in Nations about him, or among Inferiour Magistrates under him. in reference to others of his Subjects, or whether he had this represented to him by the Light of the Lord's Spirit, it is all one. he calls it *An Evil*, to wit, an Evil of Sin, upon their part, who so abuse their own power to conferr power upon the Unworthy, and an Evil of Affliction to the Godly, who are born down by that means, and an Evil of Punishment to others, who have provoked God to set wicked Men over them: And he calls it an *Evil under the Sun*, to point out the Universality of it.

Next, He expresseth the cause of this Abuse of Government, to be the *Mistake or Sin* of the supreme Ruler, who should prevent and oppose such evil Administration. He looked upon
this.

this as flowing from the Ignorance, and perverse Disposition of the Rulers.

Thirdly, He giveth two particular Instances of this Mis-government. The *One* is, That *Folly is set in great dignity*: By *Folly* is meant the foolish Man, and according to the Language of the Scripture, especially in this Man's Writtings, the graceless and wicked Man, whom he calls *Folly* in the abstract, importing one wicked in the highest degree, such a Man, saith he, is set in *high Dignity*, the Word is plural *Dignities*, importing the highest places of Power and Trust in the Commonwealth, or that all such places were so disposed of, or that one such extremely wicked person had many Offices conferred upon him. The other Instance is, That the *Rich sit in low place*: By the *Rich* cannot be meant one Rich only in things worldly, because the *Fool* might be such, and so the opposition were not pertinent, neither were it an *Evil* to place such in a low degree, but by the *Rich* is meant one enriched with Knowledge and Grace, especially with Abilities for Government, as the Word is used *Pl. 45. 12.* And by *sitting in a low place* is meant, to be out of publick Employment, and in an abject and despised Condition. *Isa. 47. 1.*

Fourthly, He enlarges this evil Administration in two Instances, while he saith, *I have seen Servants upon horses: and Princes walking, &c.* The meaning whereof is, That he had observed Eminent and Honourable Persons, of Noble and Free Spirits, as *Princes* should be in a Commonwealth, reduced to extreme Misery for want of publick Employment, which they deserve; and *Servants* or Men of base slavish Spirits, fit for no other Employment than to be at their Command, advanced to Rule over them. Or this Verse may be looked upon as a Comparison illustrating Mis-government in the former Instances thus, This preferring of the Unworthy, and slighting of the Worthy, is no less unsuitable, than if a Prince should page on foot, his Servant riding on a stately Horse.

Hence

Hence Learn 1. Those that would prove faithful in any Employment, especially of trust and charge over others, ought carefully to mark the Faults of others in the like Employment; that they may eschew them themselves, and may improve their power in their place, for reforming them in others: For here Solomon marks the Evils incident to Rulers, and doubtless as a Godly King he made the forementioned use of this Observation, *There is an Evil that I have seen under the Sun.* &c.

2. The faithful Servants of Christ must not only discover the Errours and Miscarriages of Inferiours, and common People, but they must also point out the Faults and Miscarriages incident to Rulers, and those that are in Power and Authority, and sometimes publish these before the Church, lest people look upon their Faults as no Faults, and that they may be stirred up to Mourn for them: For as we may safely conceive Solomon to make use of this Observation as a King and Ruler for eschewing these Faults himself, which he observed common among Rulers, so may we also look upon him as a faithful Preacher discovering them to the Church, and therein exemplary to other Preachers. See 1 Tim. 5. 20. *There is an Evil which I have seen under the Sun, as an Errour which proceedeth from the Ruler.*

3. Though we ought to look up to the Lord, as having a Holy Hand in permitting and ordering wicked Men to have power and preferment, and the Godly to be born down and slighted by them, for the punishment of Peoples Sins, Prov. 28. 2. The manifesting of his great power in bringing down wicked Men from their Eminency, Ezod, 9. 16. yet whatever we observe of that sort in humane Affairs, we must still Father the same upon Mens Sin and Corruption, as the procuring cause that it should be so, and as the active Instrument making it to be so. It is Mens Errour, and God is free of it as it is an Errour: For so did Solomon look upon it as an Errour proceeding from the Ruler.

4. Rulers

4. Rulers should look upon themselves as no less subject to Errours than other Men, and in a special way ready to manifest their Errour, in the matter of disposing places of power and trust under them, which should make all Men that have power, the more earnest with God for his Direction in the matter of Intrusting others. *Numb. 27. 16. Ait. 1. 24.* For Solomon did observe this Miscarriage in State Affairs, *As an Errour proceeding from the Ruler.*

5. Although we ought not to excuse or extenuat the Faults of any, *I/a. 5. 23.* And every one whole Calling gives him that liberty, ought to aggredge the Faults of Rulers, especially to themselves, for their Conviction and Humiliation. *2 Sam. 22. 7. &c.* Yet Christian Charity and Wisdom dictat, that we should put the fairest construction we can, upon the Actions of others, especially Rulers and Men in Authority, considering how easie it is for them to miscarry, who must see much of their Work with other Mens Eyes, especially in advancing of persons to Power and Trust, sometimes upon others Recommendations, and sometimes upon the flattety and hypocritical Pretences of Men themselves whom they have no ground to distrust: For Solomon speaks of the Mis-government of Rulers in the most modest Terms that he might, as *an Errour* that proceedeth from the Ruler.

6. When wicked Men are advanced to Rule and Eminency among Men, they labour to fill all the places of Power and Trust under them with such as themselves, that they may have many to serve them in their Lusts, and few to oppose or make them ashamed For it comes from the *Errour of the Ruler*, that *Folly* is set in *high dignity*.

7. When wicked Men are advanced to power and place, the godly & they that are enriched with fit Induements for Government, are not only slighted, being put out or kept out of Power; but often also reduced to great Misery, oppressed & born down: the Rch here is one enriched with Gifts, especially Wisdom, as the

the opposition shews, *The Rich sit in a low place*, or, as the Word signifies, a despicable and afflicted Condition.

8. Though the preferring of wicked Men, and bearing down of the Godly, ought to be patiently submitted unto, as it is permitted and ordered by the Lord for wise Ends; yet it ought to be resented as a great Grievance, the Godly ought to be deeply afflicted when they see the great Interests of Churches or States, put in the Hands of base and unworthy Men, who have neither Grace nor Wit to manage them for God's Glory, or the good of others: And they ought to lament, and lay the Case before the Lord, who can reform such Abuses. For so Solomon reprobates it as an Evil under the Sun, that the Hearts of the Godly may be affected with it, as his own was, *That Folly is set in great dignity, and the Rich in low place, that Servants are on Horses, and Princes walking, &c.*

9. There is so much ambition of worldly Greatness in the Hearts of the Godly, and so little of the faith of a future Reward, wherein they should comfort themselves against the want of preferment among Men, that the discerning of the Miscarriage of Rulers in disposing of Places and Trust, is ready to discourage them, and to make them weary of their Duty, while they see wicked Men preferred, and the Godly slighted. Therefore doth the Spirit of God find it necessary to discover it as the main occasion of their *leaving of their place*, and deserting of their Duty, press'd in the former Words, *That Folly is set in great dignity, and the Rich in low place, &c.*

10. Worldly Dignity and Preferment is a very uncertain and changeable thing; And therefore no wise Men should set their Heart upon it, as any part of their Happiness; they should use their place and power well, while they have it, and prepare for a Change, since though they be in *Dignity* to day, they may sit in a *low place* to morrow, though they be on *Horse* this day as *Princes*, they may be as *Servants on foot* the next. For so had Solomon observed it, and holds it forth to be made use

of for promoting his main Scope, the warning of mens Hearts from pursuing any earthly thing for their Happiness, I have seen Servants upon horses, and Princes walking as Servants upon the earth.

It is folly for Men to Judge of Mens Parts and Qualifications, according to their preferment, or debasement in the World, seeing thro' the Corruption and Error of Men in Eminency, places of Power and Trust are often conferred, not according to the worth and ability of persons, but upon other carnal and base Considerations. For Solomon observed Folly set in dignity, and the Rich set in low place, Servants riding, and Princes walking as Servants.

Ver. 8. He that diggeth a Pit shall fall into it, and who breaketh an Hedge a Serpent shall bite him.

Who removeth Stones shall be hurt therewith: and he that cleaveth Wood shall be endangered thereby.

Albeit these words may be safely taken in the general, as containing a Threatning, illustrat by so many Similitudes as are here made use of, against all sort of malicious Plotting, or intending Mischief against our Neighbour; seeing the Scripture threatens this Sin frequently under the like Similitudes, Ps. 7. 19, 16. to wit, That God shall return their way upon their own Head, and punish them according as they intended to do to others. Obad. 18. And so the words are applicable to Misapprits, advancing unworthy persons to places of Dignity, as well as to Plotters against lawful Magistrates, or others; Yet it seems most suitable to the Context, to take the words as an Argument to dissuade Men from seditious Plots, and treasonable Interprises, against those in lawful Authority, even though there be many Grievances in their Government, and to persuade rather to that yielding, mild, and condescending Temper (so far as may be with a good Conscience) formerly

merly described. Now this Sin which usually passes under the Name of *Sedition* or *Rebellion*, together with the punishment of it, which God often inflicts even in this Life, and always at last where it is continued in, the wise Man sets out under four Similitudes, every one whereof doth illustrate both the nature of the Sin, and the hazard that may be expected to follow it.

The first is, of one *digging a Pit*; whereby may be meant, the making of treacherous Plots for taking away the Life of Rulers, that men may come at their ambitious Designs, whereof Rulers do frustrate them. And by the *falling in it*, is meant, that such plotting often tends to the ruine of the Plotters. There is a Metaphor in the Words, taken from Hunters, who having made Pits for taking of wild Beasts, do unawares fall into them themselves: And so these who out of Discontentment, or upon Disappointment of their ambitious Designs, do plot the Ruine and Removal of Rulers (though in some things mis-carrying in their Government) are often in God's Righteous Judgement cut off themselves, as is clear in the Examples of *Abalom*, *Achitophel*, and others.

The Second is, Of one breaking down a Hedge, and hurt by a Serpent, which may be thus applied, As they that break down their Neighbours Hedge, especially out of Malice, may readily be stung unawares, by Adders that lurk thereabout: So those who rather than be held from places of Preferment, which their Ambition aspires to, would attempt to pluck up and ruine the established Government in the State or Church wherein they live (which like a Hedge serves to protect the Lords People, who are the Plants of His Garden, from the Incursion of wild Beasts) may justly expect to meet with some Stroke, as unexpected and incurable, as the biting of a Serpent uses to be.

The Third is, Of one removing Stones and hurt therewith, where the Metaphor seem to be taken from one removing *Lead Marks* (which are great Stones set up for distinguishing

every Man's property) that he may encroach upon what is his Neighbours; Or of one pulling down his Neighbours House, who may readily be wounded or hurt with the Stones thereof. So he, who for accomplishing his own private Designs, and satisfying his own discontented Humour, would enterprize the innovating, or changing the fundamental Constitutions of Government, which serve to distinguish every Mans propriety, in Civil or Ecclesiastical Matters, may justly look for his own ruine one way or other for his so doing.

The Fourth is, Of one cleaving Wood and endangered thereby. The Metaphor and Application of it is plain, that as one violently striking Wood, may readily either with the Instrument he uses, or the broken peices of the Timber, receive a wound: So he, who by his Sedition and Faction in State or Church, doth interprize to cleave and rent the Society he lives in, which is as one Stick or peice of Wood, may expect to smart for his pains.

Hence Learn 1. Envy and Ambition put Men upon such violent Courses, that their Minds are hardly brought to consider either the Evil or Hazard of their way: So that they who deal with such, must not in a general and indifferent way speak against these Lusts, but must insist in clearing the nature and hazard of them, inculcating upon Men who are Slaves to them, what they may expect as the issue of their way. For so doth Solomon here by four several Similitudes, each one whereof speaks somewhat of the evil of these Lusts, and represents, in a new Notion, the hazard of going way to them, *He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it, and whose breaketh an Alder, &c.*

3 As the Lord will prove Himself very terrible in punishing wicked Magistrates for their abuse of their power, especially in preferring the Wicked, and oppressing or slighting the Godly. So will He also severely punish all those who, out of Discontentment, find more great relation to the person of a Magistrate, or being disappointed of their ambitious

Designs, which they have had of promotion by them, will not stand to subvert even Order and Government it self, and put all to confusion, that they may gain their own Ends. For the Words are exprest in such general Terms, as they may be applyed both to Magistrats interpreting evil against the Godly under them, and to people also as dissuading them from malicious Plots and treasonable Practices, even against the persons of such as do abuse their Power, *He that digs a Pit shall fall into it, and whose breaks a Hedge a Serpent shall bite him, &c.*

3. When Inferiours being slighted by Superiours, shake off Duty to them, and do not study by a mild, patient and condescending Carriage, to regain their Favour, their Envy and discontented Humour will readily put them upon the plotting of the ruine of their Superiours, and upon Courses destructive to the peace of the Society wherein they live. For those whom he exhorted before, in the case of being slighted by Men in power; Or discerning their abuse of Government, to continue at their Duty, and to study, by yeilding so far as they might, to pacifie incensed Rulers: He now supposes to fall upon malicious Plots and seditious Attempts, which he here sets out, by digging of a Pit, breaking of a Hedge, &c. and threatens the same with Judgements, under the Similitudes of falling into the Pit, being bitten by the Serpent, &c.

4. They that would reclaim Sinners from their evil ways, especially such violent Courses as Ambition, Discontentment and Envy put them upon, must change their strain often, and use variety of Arguments, taking them sometimes from the hazard of giving way to these Passions, and sometimes from the advantage of restraining them. For having dissuaded from shaking off Duty, even to injuring Magistrates, and perswaded to a yeilding, mild and condescending Carriage toward them, from the probable advantage of that way, in the fourth Verse, He doth now prosecute the same Design, by insisting upon the hazard of the contrary Course, *He that digs a Pit shall fall*

fall into it; and he that breaks a Hedge a Serpent shall bite him; and he that removeth Stones shall be hurt therewith, and he that cleaveth Wood shall be endangered thereby.

5. The Lust of Envy or Revenge, especially when it flows from Pride, and desire of vain Glory, crushed by Disappointment, will put Men upon variety of Courses for satistying of it, and make the discontented persons, in whom it reigns, violent to gain their Point; yea and so cruel, that to have satisfaction of one or a few, they will not care to undo the Peace and Tranquillity of the whole Society, whereof those are Members. Therefore doth the Spirit of God set forth these Courses, which malicious and discontented Minds, put men upon, by so many Similitudes, *digging a Pit, breaking a Hedge, removing of Stones, cleaving of Wood.*

6. That Mischief which malicious Minds contrive and intend against others, the Lord uses to bring upon the Heads of the Plotters, He makes the Snares they have laid for others to catch themselves, as is clear in the Instances of *Abstem, Achitophel, Haman*, and others: And tho' the Lord may long spare such, and let them sometimes execute their cruel Designs upon others, He will at last make out the Truth of all such Threatnings upon all that persist in their vitious Courses, *He that digs a Pit shall fall into it, and he, &c.*

Verf. 10. *If the Iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, he must use more strength: but Wisdom is profitable to direct.*

ALthough the same Similitude be here insisted upon, which was made use of in the close of the former Verse, to set out the pains of a discontented person, to accomplish his malicious designs; yet it cannot be thought that the same particular purpose is insisted upon: For then it should seem that *Solomon* were describing the malicious Ploter, when his English is not

not fit enough for accomplishing his Ends, to take the more pains, and exerce more of his strength; and that he were commending Wisdom for a Directory in such seditious Plots, as were formerly set out by the *clearing of Wood* and other Similitudes. Therefore it is safest to take this Verse with reference to the main Scope of the Chapter, which is to commend the Study of Christian Prudence, and the evidencing thereof, as useful to direct Men how to walk in such difficult Cases, as have been spoken of before, especially when they have to do with incensed Rulers, who abuse their power by exalting Vile Men, and beating down the better sort; and to direct them how to keep a straight Course, that they may neither give just occasion of Displeasure to those in Authority, nor miscarry toward them when they are unjustly incensed.

And for this End, He *First* shews what a Loss and Disadvantage Men have, who are not *Sharp-sighted* in such difficult Cases, it will cost them great pains to come to any clearness what to do; and this he sets out in terms borrowed from one working with a blunt *Iron*, it will cost him much force and pains to effectuat any thing by it: So if a Man, in such dark Cases, find his Wit very *blunt*, and that he hath formerly neglected to use all lawful Means for sharpening of it, and clearing of his Understanding, that he might know his Duty; then must he exerce more *Strength*, and be at the more pains, which may be both taken as his disadvantage, and an intimation of his Correction for his former Laziness, that he must now muster up the more Forces (for the Word *Strength* signifies an *Army*): before he can get any thing done to purpose: And it also imports his Duty upon supposition of his present Darkness, because of former Negligence, it is his best now to be at the more pains.

Then *Next*, He shews the Advantage which he hath who is endued with Wisdom, it is *Profitable*, or (as the Word signifies) it is *excellent* to direct him to make plain or straight his way

way before him, as the Scripture elsewhere expresses the effect of sanctified Prudence in such difficult Cases. *Pf. 5. 8.*

Hence Learn 1. When Mens Cases are most difficult, and they have most to do with their Wit, they will readily find it most dull and blunt, as the Fruit of their former Laziness, and want of pains in sharpening of it, their not fore-casting of Difficulties (for so being surpris'd with them, their Fear darkens their Reason) and the Lord's with-drawing Light for a time, to drive them to His Word and Spirit for Counsel: For in such a Case doth this Similitude suppose Men to be in reference to the difficult Case formerly mentioned, *If the Iron be blunt,*

2. When Men find their Wit dull and blunt in taking up their Duty, or their Courage abated to venture upon it thorow Difficulties, they ought to labour to sharpen the one, and raise up the other by serious meditation upon the Word for Light, *Pf. 119. 24.* imploring the help of the Spirit, *who leads in all truth, Pf. 143. 10.* and by the use of every other Mean, which the Lord uses to Bless to His People, for increase of their Light and strength in Straits, *Prov. 2. 4.* For while he saith, *If the Iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge,* he doth not approve of neglecting to whet it, but rather minds of the Duty which should be gone about in case of former Negligence, *Then must he put to more strength.*

3. When Laziness or Negligence in the use of Means, doth accompany Dulness and Darknes of Mind, and want of Courage, it puts Men to much pains and toil before they can effectuat any thing; yea and more than might formerly have sharpened and fitted them for their Duty, and made the same easie to them: For this may be looked upon as a great Disadvantage they shall have, who are both Lazy and Dull, *If the Iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more force.*

4. Though we find our Understanding very dark as to our Duty, and our Courage to grapple with Difficulties very small

small, so as after many Essays, we come little nearer our point: yet the sense and discerning hereof ought to be so far from making us sit up, and quite our hopes of any success, that it should make us double our diligence in the use of all lawful Means, especially in imploying the Lord for pardon of our former Negligence, and for his teaching now in a new Strait: For this *putting so of more strength*, may be looked upon as a Mans best in the Case supposed, *If the Iron be blunt, and he do not whet (or have not whetted) the edge, then must he put to more strength.*

5. It is not our carnal Reason, nor the counsel of the wisest of worldly Men, that will be a good Guide to us in dark times, and difficult Cases, especially when we may be in hazard of Suffering. Onely that Wisdom which comes from Above by the Word and Spirit of the Lord will be able to direct us: For of this Wisdom Solomon here speaks, while he saith, *Wisdom is profitable to direct.*

6. Whatever hazard Men may undergo, or loss they may sustain, in following the Direction of heavenly Wisdom, yet in so far as they are led by it, they shall be truly Gainers, their very Losses shall prove profitable to them, Gods Approbation, the peace of a good Conscience, and a sure Reward at last, are great Advantages. For (saith he) *Wisdom is profitable to direct.*

7. There is no Case a Christian can be in, so dark or difficult, but that Wisdom which comes from Above and shines in the Light of the Word. Ps. 119. 105. and it is to be had by humble dependance upon God for the teaching of His Spirit, Ps. 25. 9. is sufficient to direct him, and to make the way wherein he ought to walk so plain and straight before him, that he shall be helped to make such progress in it, as if there were no stumbling Blocks in it at all: For, saith he, *Wisdom is profitable to direct*, the Word signifies to *make plain and smooth* his way before him, not by removing Difficulties, but by teaching him how to walk over them, and not be hindred by them in his Christian Course.

Ver. 11. Surely the Serpent will bite without enchantment, and a Babler is no better.

12. The words of a wise Mans mouth are gracious; but the lips of a Fool will swallow up himself.
13. The beginning of the words of his mouth is Folliesness, and the end of his talk is mischievous Madnes.

THe Preacher doth farther prove the necessity of heavenly Wisdom, by shewing the hazard of the want of it, and the farther advantage of having it in such difficult Cases as have been formerly mentioned, when Men have to do with offended Rulers, and because Mens Rashness and Inconsideration often manifested by their reproachful Speeches against these in Authority, occasion much trouble to them, and that justly: Therefore he teaches here, that heavenly Wisdom is to be manifested in bridling and restraining the Tongue from rash and malicious Discourses, and imploying the same in edifying and savoury Speeches.

And for this end he doth *First* by a Similitude point out the evil and hazard of slanderous and detracting Speeches, Surely (saith he) *a Serpent will bite without Enchantment*; It is known that Similitudes taken from Serpents, Scorpions and Asps, are frequently made use of in Scripture, to set out that Wickedness and Venome which is vented by the Tongue, *Ezek. 26. Rom. 3. 13.* As for the *Enchanting* of Serpents here spoken of, it can make nothing for defence of the use of Magick, or such diabolish Arts, seeing Similitudes may be drawn from the worst things to illustrat the best, as Christ's second Coming, is compared to the coming of a Thief in the Night: Beside the Word translated *Enchantment* signifies nothing but a *low way of speaking*, or muttering, which possibly hath been in use in Solomon's time to divert or deter Serpents from offending or stinging, or to take them that they might be slain. And the Scripture uses this same Word for any effectual way of dealing with Men by words, especially

specially Eloquence, or moving Arguments. *Iſa.* 3. 3. And ſo by *Incantment* (to apply the Similitude) is meant nothing but the exerciſe of that heavenly Wiſdom, which teaches Men to ſpeak mild and pacifying Words, eſpecially to provoked Rulers, and without this a *Babler* (ſaith *Solomon*) or as the Word is in the Original, one that is *Lord of the Tongue*, who ſpeaks as freely, whatever his ambitious Spirit incenſed with Diſappointment ſuggeſts, as if he were to make account to none, *He is no better* than the Serpent that bites, and ſo readily procures his own Ruine (as the Serpent doth) from thoſe whom he provokes by his bitter Words.

Next, He ſhews the Advantage of that heavenly Wiſdom, which is. that it teaches the Man indued with it, to make uſe of ſuch Words as may miniſter Grace to others, and conciliate the Grace or Favour even of offended Rulers, and ſo *his Words are gracious*.

Thirdly, He enlarges the woful Effects of the inconsiderat and raſh Carriage of Men void of this Wiſdom, eſpecially in their Diſcourſes, while he ſaith, *The lips of a Fool will ſwallow up himſelf*. The *Lips* being one of the Inſtruments of Speech, are put for the Speech it ſelf, by a Figure ordinary in Scripture, theſe *ſwallow* up a Man, when he by his raſh Words inſnares himſelf, and ſo proves his own Deſtroyer.

Laſtly, He deſcribes the progreſs of ſlandrous and envious Speeches, the riſe or principle of them, is *Leviſy* or Inconſtancy, as the Word *Fooliſhneſs* ſignifies, but they go on to worſe, till the Man at laſt ſhew himſelf acted with Fury (as the other word *miſchievous Madneſs* ſignifies) whereby he is put upon mad Courtes againſt them whom he envies, and ſuch as prove deſtructive to himſelf.

Hence Learn 1. It is not more natural to a Serpent to ſting or bite, when no means are uſed to prevent or reſtrain it, than it is to a Man void of the Wiſdom of God, to vent his Malice upon any diſcontentment, by bitter and reproachful Speeches

against others, especially those in Authority, of whom the Discourse all along doth mainly run: Therefore doth the Spirit of God here and elsewhere make use of this and the like Similitudes, to set out the Poison which a malicious Heart casts out by the Tongue. *Surely the Serpent will bite without Inchantment, and a Babler is no better.*

2. Opprobrious and Invective Speeches are extremely bitter, and do exceedingly wound the Spirits of them against whom they are vented, they are in a manner deadly, and hardly can the Wound given to ones Reputation by them, be healed again, as is imported also in this Similitude, which sets forth the Evil of this Sin, it is like *the byting of a Serpent without Inchantment.*

3. Heavenly Wisdom teaches Christians a holy Art of Inchanting their own Tongues, making them to speak such soft Language as may pacifie the Passions of others, and not wound or sting them: For he supposes that heavenly Wisdom will teach Men this Art, that their Tongues shall not be like Serpents biting others, while, as a Commendation of that Wildom, he saith, *Surely the Serpent will bite without Inchantment.*

4. The reason of Mens rash and inconsiderat Speeches, especially such as tend to the disgrace of those in lawful Authority, is that they look upon their Tongues as their own, and upon themselves as absolute Lords and Masters of their Discourses: For the Word here translated a *Babler*, is in the Original, he that is Lord or *Master of the Tongue*, to wit, in his own conceit.

5. Though rash and sinful Speeches may escape them that are truly Wise, and Gracious. 1 Sam. 25. 22. yet in so far as Men are indued with heavenly Wisdom, and act according to the directions of it, their Speeches and Discourses even of others, yea and of those who possibly have injured them, will savour of Grace, and be sometimes blest to convey Grace to others, Ephes. 4. 29. and to gain Favour to themselves, even from their Enemies, *As. 26. 21.* while they commend the free

Grace

Grace and Favour of God in their Discourses, *Psal. 145. 7.* and any appearances of Good they see in others though Enemies to them. *Act. 26. 26, 27.* In all which respects, *The words of a wise Mans mouth are gracious.*

6. They that are not endued with heavenly Wisdom, which directs Men in the nearest way for their own true safety *Prov. 10. 9.* do but make Snares for themselves by all their wit, and while they please themselves most by expressing their discontented and envious Humours, are running on to their own Ruine, and so prove self Murderers: For, saith he, *the lips of a Fool will swallow him up.*

7. As the greatest sins and snares have often their rise from the smallest beginnings. *Prov. 17. 14.* So they that want saving Illumination, the beginning whereof is the Fear of the Lord, will still go from evil to worse, especially in their bitter Invectives, and Satyrick speeches against others, which are mainly intended in this place: What was rashly spoken at first, will readily recoil back upon the Heart, and root it self in malice; and the Heart being engaged by a word inconsiderately spoken of those against whom Men seem to have but some small prejudice, will study to forge or seek out, and then magnify the grounds of it, and at last (if left to it self) will readily drive the person to Satan, to be helped by him to vent its malice: For (saith Solomon) *The beginning of the words of his mouth, is (but) foolishness,* the Word signifies Levity or Inconstancy, and the end of his talk is mischeivous Madnes, which signifies the height of Wickedness.

Ver. 14. *A Fool also is full of words, a Man cannot tell what shall be: and what shall be after him, who can tell him?*

15. *The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the City.*

Solomon goes on to describe, a person void of the saving knowledge of God, and of his duty, who hath ordinarily

in this Book the name of the *Fool*, by giving some Resemblances between him and a natural *Fool*. And *First* he describes him from the multitude of his *Words*, *he is full of them*; Or (as the original bears) he *multiplies* or *magnifies* his words, importing his *Boasting*, especially of future Events; as appears by the following words, wherein the Preacher makes answer to some of his words, he *boasts* of what he will do afterward without dependance upon God, and to this *Solomon* saith a *Man cannot tell what shall be*: It being only proper to God to foretell future Events; *Isa. 44. 7*. Again he either presums to determine future Events or is Anxiously inquisitive about them, to this it is Answered, *and what shall be after him who can tell him?* The meaning is, none can inform him how things shall go the next Month or Year, which may be the Month or Year after he is gone.

Secondly, He describes such a Man from the fruitfulness of his indeavours, he is like a blind *Fool* that is out of the way to a City, and wearies himself to find it, though that be one of the easiest things, that even Children may know, so the Man who is void of true and saving Wisdom, spends himself in fruitless indeavours, and cannot so much as manage aright the most common of his Affairs.

Hence Learn 1. Unless a Mans Wit be sanctified and exercised about the study of Reconciliation with God thorow Christ, and the way of Glorifying him by Living in his fear and obedience, though he were esteemed an Oracle for Worldly Wit among men, he is a very *Fool* to himself, and in Gods esteem the best of his Wisdom is Foolishness: therefore doth the Spirit of God here by *Solomon*, as frequently elsewhere in Scripture, describe the unregenerat Man by the carriage and practice of a meer *Fool*, and the description agrees even to such as *Achitophel*, *A Fool also is full of words, a Man cannot tell what shall be*.

2. They that have least knowledge, have often most discourse, the conceit that such have of their knowledge makes them esteem so much of what themselves say, and so undervalue

value any thing else, that others can hardly have place to speak beside them, and the same Conceit makes them give little or no time to deliberation before they speak, and less to reflection upon the Impertinency and Sin that is in the multitude of their words: For thus doth the Spirit of the Lord describe such, *A Fool also is full of words* in

3. When Men are bold in determining future Events, especially the success of their own Undertakings, or so anxiously inquisitive about them, that they are taken off from their present Duty, they prove themselves destitute of saving Wisdom, which teaches Men to commit their way to the Lord, that their Thoughts may be established anent future Events. *Prov. 16. 3.* and so to follow their Duty with no less Confidence, while they are ignorant of what may come after, than if they did know it. *As. 20. 22, 24.* For the Question to which Solomon here answers, imports the Man destitute of this Wisdom, to be of the disposition formerly described, *A Man cannot tell what shall be, and what shall be after him who can tell him?*

4. God hath reserved to himself the prerogative of knowing things to come, and of revealing the same to the Children of Men, how far, and in what manner he pleases; that they may be taught humble Dependence upon Him for as much Light from His Word and Spirit, concerning things to come, as may incite them to make a right use of their present time: For this Question imports, that both Men and Angels are secluded from this Prerogative of knowing, or making known future Events, *And what shall be after him, who can tell him?*

5. They that esteem Christs sweet and easie Service a Toil, as all Unregenerat Men do, *Mal. 1. 13.* shall but waste and spend themselves even to *Fainting* (as the word here translated *Wearie* signifies) in any course they can take for satisfaction, and none of this sort are in a better condition than others, as to their finding of any rest in their way: For (saith Solomon) *The labour of the Foolish wearies every one of them.*

6. Men

6. Men who neglect to imploy Christ for Eye-salve, that they might see things of greatest Concernment for His Glory, and the salvation of their own Souls, are often, for their so doing justly left to miscarry in their most common and ordinary Affairs; and from this comes the ruine of so many great Estates and other Inconveniencies, which even many of the wisest Men of this World run themselves into: For the Spirit of God describes the disposition of Unregenerat Men void of the saving Knowledge of God and His Will, from their resemblance to a foolish man, who knows not so much as the way *into the City.*

Ver. 16. *We to thee O Land, when thy King is a Child, and thy Princes eat in the morning.*

17. *Blessed art thou, O Land, when thy King is the Son of Nobles, and thy Princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness.*

Solomon having shewn some of the principal Grievances which the Godly meet with under the bad Government of Rulers, and directed them how to carry themselves in reference to the same; He doth here regrave the woful case of that Land, over which insufficient and vitious Rulers are set; and upon the other hand, proclaims the Happiness of that Land that hath Rulers well qualified for their Employment.

For clearing of this, we may consider *First*, That he speaks to the *Land*, intending the Inhabitants thereof, as is frequent in Scripture, *Isa. 1. 2. Jer. 22. 19.* the more to move the People who have bad Magistrates to resent their own sad Case, and to search out, and mourn for the procuring Causes thereof, and to incite them who have good Magistrates over them, to be thankful to God for so great a Blessing.

Secondly, The Wo and Blessedness he here speaks of, is mainly to be taken with reference to a temporal and outward Condition; though doubtless the same, as also the Causes thereof,

to wit, the Wickedness or Goodness of those in power, may have influence upon the Well or Wo of the people, in reference to their spiritual and eternal Condition, they being drawn to many Sins and Temptations by the one, and encouraged much in Well-doing by the other.

Thirdly, He describes the Rulers both supreme and inferiour, under whose Government the Land is happy or miserable respectively. And *First* for the King, or supreme Ruler, whose Land is miserable, he describes him from this, that he is a *Child*, which is not to be understood of his Years or Age: For the Scripture is clear, that people have been happy under a young King, even a Child being vertuously inclined, and well governed by wise Over-seers, as is clear in *Solomon* himself, *Joash*, 2 *Chron.* 24. 2. 17. and others: And therefore it is to be understood of his Childish Disposition, Wisdom, Sobriety, and other Vertues, qualifying Men for Government, being wanting in him; in which sense *Rehoboam*, though one and forty Years old when he began to Reign, 1 *King.* 14. 21. is yet spoken of as a Child. 2 *Chron.* 13. 17. Next for inferiour Magistrates or Princes, they are described from their Sensuality or Intemperance, they *eat in the morning*; whereby is meant that they are Men addicted to their Lusts, their own Interests and Pleasures (whereof one is put for all others) the satisfaction whereof they prefer to the welfare of the people, and are taken up, therewith even at these seasons which should be set apart for the weighty Duties of their place, For in these Countreys their Judicatories sat in the morning, *Jer.* 21. 12. *Secondly*, He describes the Rulers whose Land is Happy. And 1. for the King or supreme Magistrat, he is *the Son of Nobles*, which is not to be understood so much of his Royal Descent, that he is of Noble Birth, or that there is Royal Blood in his Veins, which yet is not to be excluded here, seeing the Scripture speaks of the want of it, as some disadvantage to a King or supreme Magistrat. *Judg.* 9. 18, And it is to be understood of those

truly Noble Qualifications of Wildom, Piety, and others after mentioned, fitting him for Government; when these are in a man in an eminent measure, he is then *the Son of Nobles*, that is, truly and eminently Noble: For the *Hebrews* by such Expressions as this, hold forth the superlative degree, a *Son of Belial*, is a man extremely wicked, so *the Son of Nobles* is one of a truly Noble Spirit, eminently qualified for Government. And next for the inferiour Magistrates, they are described from their Sobriety, and right using of the Creatures, and consequently of all the Priviledges accompanying their Place and Dignity, they use them all to strengthen them for their Duty, and not for the satisfaction of their Lusts.

Hence Learn 1. It becomes the Ministers of Christ clearly to represent to people their misery, even in reference to their outward condition, and the causes thereof, though in so doing, they be necessitat to discover the wickedness of their Rulers, both supreme and inferiour, which ought to be no offence to them, while they find Ministers pressing also upon people all Duties they owe to Rulers, as *Solomon* hath done before, that people may be stirred up to mourn for their sins, which have procured the setting up of such: And it is also their Duty to describe the Happiness of people, as to their outward condition, who have good Magistrates, that they may be thankful to God for so great a mercy: And this they ought to do with sympathy and resentment of the one case, and with rejoicing and praise for the other: For so doth the Preacher here. *Wo to thee, O Land, &c. Blessed art thou, O Land, &c.*

2. Magistrates and Rulers that are vitious and insufficient for Government, are great Plagues to the Land over which they are set, and bring much Wo upon the Inhabitants thereof, partly by their bad Example encouraging others to sin. *Pf. 12. 8.* and partly by their tolerating and establishing of wickedness by a Law. *1 King. 12. 28.* And so drawing down Judgements upon their Subjects, and that not only in their

own time, but after they are gone, 2 Sam. 21. 1. *Woe to thee O Land, when thy King is a Child &c.*

3. When men intrusted with the supream power and Authority over the Lords people, have little or no understanding of the revealed will of the Lord 1 Cor. 14. 20. which should be their great study Deut. 17. 18. 19. when they are inconstant, especially in matters of Religion, Ephes. 4. 14. easily carried away with evil Counsel, 1 Kings 12. 8. Nothing affected with the oppressions and grievances of the people under their charge Jf. 3. 4. then however they may be Men for age, esteem or the like, they are but Children as to their disposition and carriage, as appears by the Scriptures cited holding forth their Resemblances to Children: And their subjects must needs be in a woful and sad Condition, much to be resented, as here Solomon doth, *Woe to thee O Land when thy King is a Child.*

4. As it is too frequently found that when the Supream Magistrat is unfit for, or defective in the Discharge of the duties belonging to his place, the Inferiour Magistrates are no better, but rather worse, he being careful to get such only as will serve him in his sinful humour, preferred to places of power under him; and they again being apt to abuse his simplicity and insufficiency, by making his power and means subservient to to their Carnal Ends: So when the Inferiour Magistrates are such it doth much augment the Woe and Misery of the people who might be relieved by their prudence and fidelity supplying the defects of the Supream: For Solomon speaks of those as ordinarily joined, and this last as a special Addition to their Misery whose case it is, *Woe to thee O Land when thy King is a Child, and thy Princes eat in the Morning.*

5. When Magistrates give up themselves to the satisfaction of their sensual Lusts, especially their intemperancy, they become then wholly indisposed for managing of the weighty affairs of their place, see Prov. 31. 4. and cannot but prove a great plague to their Inferiours: For this is a description of

those who prove, a *Woe* to the Land, they are *Princes that eat in the Morning.*

6. Though Nobility of Blood be an advantage to Supream Magistrats, such being ordinarily better Trained up for Government than others, and so less apt to be ravished or puffed up with the Honours, to which they are born, or the Applause of the People, with which from their Birth they have been accustomed; And less obnoxious to the contempt of many, than those who rise upon a sudden, or from a mean Condition to such Dignity (who notwithstanding being called of God and his people will be sufficiently fitted for their place, as *David* was) yet the Nobility mainly requisit in Magistrats is, that of their Disposition and carriage consisting in the eminency of their inward qualifications, such as the knowledge and fear of the Lord, which makes them truly excellent ones, *Psal. 16. 3.* In their delighting to search and study the Scriptures as those *Nobles* of *Berea* did *Act. 17. 11.* And in those Noble and Divine Exercises of Prayer and praise, which make persons truly Honourable. *1 Chron. 4. 9. 10.* for though the former Nobility may have its own advantages joined with the latter, yet separat from it, it can add nothing to the Happiness of a people, *happy art thou O Land, when thy King is the Son of Nobles.*

7. It is a Blessing which hath many Blessings in the bosome of it, to have such a Supream Magistrat, as hath been described in the former Doctrine: Then iniquity will be suppressed, and Piety and Equity advanced *Psal. 101.* and when it is so, God will rain Blessings upon the people, for the word is here in the plural number: There are *Blessednesses* to the Land, *whose King is the Son of Nobles.*

8. When the Supream Magistrat is faithful and fitted for his place, he will imploy his power to fill Inferiour places of power and trust with good men; And this also contributes not a little to the Blessedness of a people for they are here joined together

gether: *Happy art thou, O Land, when thy King is the Son of Nobles, and thy Princes eat in due season, &c.*

9. As Temperance or Sobriety in the use of the Creatures, is especially required in a Magistrat that would make Conscience in his Duty; so the great end which Princes, as every other Christian should propose to themselves in Eating, Drinking, and consequently in the use of every other lawful Allowance, should be the repairing of that strength which pains in Duty hath abated, and the gaining of new strength to be laid out in farther service to God, and following the Duties of their Calling, and not the satisfaction of their sensual Appetite, or carnal Lusts: For this is a Commendation of the inferiour Magistrates, who are a Blessing to the Land which they Govern. *Thy Princes eat for strength, and not for drunkenness.*

10. The Lord who allows Food and Refreshments upon Men, suitable to their Labour, and necessary for the cheering up of their Spirits in their Duty, hath appointed them to take the same in season, when their Employments permit them so to do; and if they observe not these seasons, they cannot expect the Blessing or sanctified use of their Injoyments. For this is given as a Commendation of good Magistrates, and consequently of all others who do so, that as they eat for the right end, so they eat in due season, and are not satisfying their Appetite, when they should be at the Duties of their Calling. *Thy Princes eat in season, for strength and not for drunkenness.*

Ver. 18. *By much slothfulness the Building decayeth, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth thorow.*

19. *A Feast is made for laughter, and Wine maketh merry, but Money answereth all things.*

Solomon doth here particularly illustrate the misery of that Land, that hath imprudent and sensual Rulers, by condemning upon the sinful Causes thereof, upon the part of these Rulers,

Rulers, and branching out the misery of the Common-wealth, as procured by their Sins.

The *First Cause* is, The *slothfulness* of the Rulers, and this he sets out by a proverbial speech, which may be applied to many things; but it seems most consonant to the whole purpose of this Chapter, to apply it to the Case of a Common-wealth, tending to ruine thorow the laziness of their Rulers: *By much slothfulness* (saith he) *the building decayeth*, the similitude being taken from a slothful Master of a Family: The words are in the Original, *by the slothfulness of them both*, or by *double slothfulness*, which may import it to be exceeding great, according to our Translation, or by the slothfulness of both the hands, which may be the Supreme and Inferiour Magistrats, who should be like two hands, jointly concurring to uphold the Common-wealth. And *thorow Idleness*, or (as the Word signifies) the falling down or remissness of the hands, *the House droppeth thorow*, and so the Timber rots, and the whole House is ruined, where the Breaches are not repaired: So doth it fare with a Kingdom or Common-wealth (which is often in Scripture compared to a House, *Iſa.* 2. 6. and 5. 7.) where the Rulers, who should be Repairers of the Breaches, and Builders up of the Ruines thereof, neglect their Duty, and indulge their own Ease, nothing but Decay and Ruine can be expected.

The *Next Cause* is *Luxury*, if the Master of a House when he should be repairing the Ruines of it, be Feasting and making merry, and spending what he hath within it, when it is coming down, the Case is very sad: So when Magistrates mind mainly their own satisfaction and pleasure, and do not soberly and seasonably, as those whom he commended before, eat for strength and not for drunkenness, ruine cannot but come upon the Common-wealth; and the effect of their Luxury he insinuates to be the poverty of the Countrey or people under them, while he saith, *Money answers all*, these Rulers must have

have Money to uphold all these Feasts, and provide that Wine which makes them merry, and that must be sucked from the poor people to answer their Lusts; and so the publick Treasure is exhausted, and the people impoverished: And therefore the Land that hath such Rulers must be very miserable.

Hence Learn 1. A Common-wealth is fitly resembled to a House; wherein there should be Order and Subordination among the Heads or Governours and Members thereof; as there is in a House, a House being held up and furnished is commodious for Habitation, a shelter from Storm and Tempest, and so will a well governed Common-wealth be: And as a House by the least decay, if not timely repaired, will soon be Ruined, so it is with a Common-wealth; And Finally, as a House decaying and letting Rain drop shorow, makes the Life of the Inhabitant very uncomfortable; so is it in a Ruinous Common-wealth. Therefore is it that the Spirit of God directs Solomon to set forth the Case of a Common-wealth, under the similitude of a House, *By much slothfulness the Building decayeth, and &c.*

2. Though the Subjects of a Kingdom or Common-wealth, have often a hand in procuring the Ruine thereof, *Isa. 24. 5.* yet the Lord doth charge the same upon the Rulers: And though they be not Oppressours or Tyrants, yet if they be Men given to their ease, or of small activity for the good of the Common-wealth, they may be charged with the Ruine thereof: For the Context shews that this *slothfulness* is mainly to be understood in reference to the Rulers: *By much slothfulness the Building decayeth.*

3. The Decay or Ruine of a Common-wealth or Incorporation, should be resented by all the Inhabitants, as the misery of every one of them, though possibly for the present several of their private Interests may remain entire, while Ruine is coming upon the Publick, because misery will at last reach them, and the publick Good should be dearer to them than their

their own particular. Therefore Solomon brings this as a proof of Wo to a Land, and so to all the Inhabitants thereof, that the *House*, which is the Common-wealth, is *decaying and dropping thorow*.

4. Where Slothfulness and Idleness prevail, there *Luxury* and excess in the use of worldly Injoyments prevail also: For upon neglect of lawful diligence, the Flesh waxes wanton, and must be pampered. Therefore this is set down as the second Cause of the Ruine, following upon the slothfulness of Rulers, which is the first Cause, their *Luxury* and *Excess*, *A Feast is made for laughter, and Wine to make merry*.

5. Though Slothfulness and Idleness bring misery upon the Sluggard by degrees, as a Ruinous House takes in Rain by Drop and Drop at first; yet being continued in, they will at last, by their effects proclaim his misery to On-lookers: Therefore doth the Preacher set forth the Fruit of Slothfulness, by the decay and dropping thorow of a House, which, if not repaired, will make the Ruine of it visible to all that pass by, and force the lazy Inhabitant either to perish in its Ruine, or seek another Habitation. *By much slothfulness the Building decayeth, and by the idleness of the hands the House droppeth thorow*.

6. As the *Luxury* and *Excess* of Rulers, is a Cause and sign of Ruine in part begun, and more hastening upon the people under their Charge; so such men having once given up themselves to their Lusts, they will follow them even amidst the Evidences of God's Displeasure against them: For this Similitude taken from the lazy Inhabitant, who while his House is decaying and dropping in upon him, is Feasting and making merry with his Companions, thinking thereby to divert the sad Thoughts of his ruinous House, which he will not get long done, represents the Temper and Carriage of wicked Rulers, who while the Common-wealth is decaying, the people growing poor, and publick Treasures exhausting, are Feasting, making merry, and spending all upon their Lusts; in which

which case it is here said, *A Feast is made for laughter, and Wine maketh merry, but Money answereth all.*

7. God taketh notice both of the seasons of Mens Eating and Drinking, especially in Feasting, and of the Ends which they propose to themselves in so doing, whether they intend only their own sensual satisfaction and carnal mirth, or the strengthening of their Bodies for doing the Lord service. For the Spirit of God, by Solomon, having shewn to the commendation of good Magistrats, that they *Eat in season, and for strength and not for drunkenness*, here takes notice of wicked Rulers Feasting when Ruine is coming upon the Common-wealth, and of the Ends they propose to themselves, their own carnal mirth and pleasure. *A Feast is made (to wit, by such Men) for laughter, and Wine makes merry.*

8. When Magistrates are negligent of their Duty, and yet luxurious and sensual, the people under their Charge cannot but be impoverished, they must have Money, for which the Poor must sweat in digging the Earth, trafficking by Sea or Land, and the like: For the peoples poverty is here insinuat, as the effect of the Rulers slothfulness and prodigality. They *Feast and make merry, but Money answereth, or procureth, all these things.*

9. Though Money of it self be the most useless thing in the World, for sustentation of humane Life; yet Providence hath made it so useful, that ordinarily it answers him that hath it with all things necessary for him, and makes them *Obedient* (as the Word *Answereth* signifies) to him. Therefore, they that have much of it, had need to look how they answer the Lord calling for Duty from them. *For Money answereth all things.*

10. Mens Lusts are very expensive, they will not get their Slothfulness and Excess maintained without much Money, the consideration whereof should make them more sober and diligent: For thir words import, that sensual Rulers must have Money, and may be looked upon as including an Argument

to dissuade them from Laziness and Excess, taken from the effect thereof, which is the poverty of the people, who must give to them that *Money, which answereth all things.*

Ver. 20. *Curse not the King, no not in thy thought, and curse not the Rich in thy bed chamber; for a Bird of the Air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*

BEcause the miscarriage of Rulers formerly described is very grievous, and ready to move the Passions of the best; Therefore doth the wise Man here dissuade from Bitterness of Spirit, or revengeful Imprecations, whether against the King or supreme Magistrat, who is the fountain of these Woes that flow upon the Land, which is committed to his Trust, or against the Rich, by whom are especially meant inferiour Magistrates, who enrich themselves by draining the Purses of the Godly: And not only doth he dissuade from open reviling of them before others, but from the inward motions of Revenge in the Heart, and the expressions thereof, even in the most retired places signified by the *Bed-chamber.*

And this Dissuasive he presseth by an Argument taken from the hazard following upon that which is dissuaded from: For (saith he) *A Bird of the Air shall carry the voice, &c.* which is not to be understood as if the Lord did always discover such secret Cursings and Imprecations in this Life, or when he doth it, that he always useth extraordinary means for bringing it about: But the meaning is, that such things shall surely be divulged, either in time for the shame and temporal punishment of the Offender, or at the end of time before Men and Angels, and that the discovery shall be as sudden, and in a way as little suspected by the Offender, as if a Bird of the Air did carry the matter.

Hence

Hence Learn 1. There is so much Self-love remaining unmortified in the best, and so little use made of these places of Scripture, which serve to compose the Spirit, and work it to submission and patience, under the hardest lot in the World, that in times especially of Oppression and Injustice, when a godly Man sees these in Authority spend his substance upon their Lusts, and oppress his person, revengeful motions are ready to arise, even in such a Mans Heart, evil Wishes, and bitter Imprecations against them, are ready to escape him: For all along Solomon speaks to the Man indued with heavenly Wisdom, directing him how to evidence the same, and here finds it necessary thus to dissuade him, *Curse not the King, &c. Curse not the Rich, &c.*

2. The Lord would have His people, even when they are oppressed and wronged by Magistrates, shewing so much respect to His Ordinance of Magistracy, as not to revile, or imprecate Vengeance upon the persons of the Magistrates, or to intertain any revengeful Thought against them, but rather when they are drawing a Curse upon themselves, to mourn for them, and pray for the Blessing of Repentance and Reformation to them: Though they be little tender of His Honour; yet while they are in His place to Men, and do in a manner carry His Name upon them, *Exod. 22. 28. He will have His people tender of their Safety and Reputation, which should engage Magistrates to Love and Obey Him, and make them ashamed when they do not so: For it is of that King and those Princes, who are enriching themselves with the spoil of the poor Godly, and spending the same upon their Lusts, as the former words make clear, that he here speaks, while he saith, Curse not the King, &c. Curse not the Rich, &c.*

3. The Holy Law of God prohibits not only the external acts of Sin, but the inward motions thereof; and not only the gross, and open out-breakings of Sin, which are scandalous to others, but the secret acting thereof in mens greatest Retirement:

ments: Mens Thoughts have a Language in God's Ear, and their secret Chamber practices are naked to His Eye: Therefore after he hath dissuaded from deserting of Duty, even to wicked Magistrates, from treasonable Plotting, open Reviling, and the like, to the offence of others, he here dissuades from Thoughts of Revenge, and secret Imprecations, *Curse not the King no not in thy thoughts, and curse not the Rich in thy Bed-chamber.*

4. The Lord can easily discover the most secret Wickedness that can be either plotted or acted by Men, sometimes He hath done it when His way of working was more extraordinary than now, by revealing it to His Servants, that it might be published to others, 1 *King*. 6. 11, 12. and ordinarily doth it, by leaving those who entertain wicked motions in their Hearts, to manifest them in their practice, especially by speaking inconsiderately to others, what hath been long harboured in their Hearts, either under promise, or from hope of secrecy, even to such as will make it known. *Prov.* 18. 2. And though wicked Motions and Practices should never come to the Worlds notice, they are all naked before the Lord. *Heb.* 4. 13. And so the Metaphor of the *Birds carrying* of them, is too slow to set forth their speedy discovery in this sense, and he shall at last make all plain before Men and Angels; and so shall one time or other manifest every Wickedness, in as swift and unexpected a way, as if the *Bird of the air did carry the voice*, and that *which both wings did tell the matter.*

5. Though respect to the Commands of God, *Psa.* 119. 2. Love to Him, 2 *Cor.* 5. 14. and such spiritual principles should be the prime restraint of the Lords people, from what is offensive to Him; yet they may make Sin hateful to their own Hearts, and restrain themselves therefrom, by other inferiour Arguments and Motives, and the same may be made use of by Christs Ministers, such as the hazard of divulging the most secret Sins some way or other: For such a Reason is here held out

out by this heavenly Preacher, to be made use of by all, *Curse not the King, &c.* for a Bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the master.

CHAP. XI.

THE ARGUMENT

THis Chapter hath two parts, In the I. whereof contained unto the 7. ver. Solomon holdeth forth the Grace and duty of Charity towards the poor, as one step of the right way towards true Happiness. In order to which he I. presseth the duty. 1. In figurative terms, importing that they would cheerfully, seasonably and believingly distribute of these good things, which God hath given them, to the poor, for the supply of what may be most needfull, comfortable and useful for them. ver. 1. And this he presseth by an Argument taken from the Gracious Return, that the conscientious performance of this duty will in due time have from the Lord, either in the same kind, or the equivalent, or transcendent value of it. ver. 1. 2. In more proper terms exhorting to the expression of their proportionable Charity, even when Objects may be multiplied. ver. 2. Which he presseth by a motive taken from the uncertainty of the continuance of ability, and opportunities of doing good that way, ver. 2. 2. He setteth down several other motives to this duty of Liberality towards the poor. The 1. Taken from the bounty of God in furnishing the Creatures for Mans use, instancing in the Clouds expending their Treasures upon the Earth to make it fruitful and serviceable to man, ver. 3. The 2. Is taken from the benefit that redounds thereby to the person giving whatever the object be, and as from the obedience he owes to his Maker; So also from the Eternal Estate of our Souls, which shall be according as they are found at death hold forth by the limits of a felled tree, which whatsoever way it falls, yet as it is profitable to the owner, and is passively obedient to him, to be employed at his pleasure: so where it falls, there it lies and it is to be found. ver. 3. He obviates these Objections which ordinarily men plead for denying or delaying these Works of Charity, arising from such emergents in their Condition, as may occasion want and misery to themselves before they die 1. By shewing the folly of looking upon future events (as Husband men by too much fearing the appearance of Wind and Rain, forbear sowing and reaping) so as to discourage from this

this, or any other duty, ver. 4. 2. By shewing that tho' they see not the good and success of this duty, nor how the promise annexed to it will be made out (even as men tho' it be near to them, yet are ignorant of the way how their own Souls were formed, how united to the Body, how they exist and act there, and when, and how they are separated from it, and how the Body its self is fearfully & wonderfully made in the Womb) yet they would not neglect the duty nor despair of the performance of the promise, notwithstanding the small appearance thereof, which to effectuate is easy to the Creator of all things. ver. 5. And 5. He again exhorteth (which may be extended to other duties of Religion) to the frequent seasonable and diligent performance of that duty of Christian Charity to the poor by the similitude of an indefatigable sower of Seed, ver. 6. which he presseth by an argument taken from the uncertainty (tho' the house of Jacob seeks him not, nor goes about that, or any other duty in vain) of temporal success of the duties or of some particular duties, or of the effects intended by us to our selves, or others, ver. 6.

In the 2d. part of this Chapter (which begins the last part of the Book) Solomon maketh Application of all his former Doctrine by pressing a *tymons* and *serious* preparation for, and minding of Death, judgement and Eternity, 1. Generally upon all, That whatever sweetness or pleasure (held forth by Light and the Sun) there be in the enjoyment of Creature-comforts in this life. ver. 7. And however the pleasures be continued during a long life. ver. 8. Yet it is their duty to remember Death, and the Eternity of Misery, that is to be to the wicked after it. ver. 8. And that so much the rather that long life and all the comforts of it, if they be not sanctified and well improved, are as empty of true Satisfaction as they are ineffectual in order to procuring true Happiness, being but vanity. ver. 8. And 2. He doth more particularly press home this exhortation of *tymons* and *serious* preparation for Death on young men who ordinarily mind nothing less, and are violent in pursuit of their lusts and pleasures, ver. 9. 10. Where He offereth to these young men. 1. His Council spoken by an Irony, which is a figure in a Holy manner mocking their sinful jovialty incident to youth. ver. 9. 2. He gives them a sad check to stay their sinful mirth by perswading them of the certainty, severity, Strickness and Terribleness of a day of judgement which alarum he gives them very home and particular by Thou and Thee. ver. 9.

And Thirdly, He draweth a Conclusion from all. ver. 10. Wherein he presses the exhortation from several motives, That in the end the neglect of it will be grief to the Heart, hurtful to the Body, and an evidence of great vanity, intimating that as neglect of duty and sinful courses (tho' pleasant) will be grief to the Soul and trouble to the Body: so youth is a very slippery time and obnoxious to many vain and foolish courses.

CHAP. XI.

- Ver. 1. *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.*
 2. *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the Earth.*

IN the first part of this Chapter, Solomon presseth the duty of Charity or Liberality to the Poor, as one step of the way to true Felicity: And this he doth *First* in borrowed Terms, *Cast thy Bread upon the waters*; whether we take the Metaphor or Similitude, made use of in the words for clearing of the Duty, to be borrowed from Merchants, who adventure their Estates upon the Waters or the Sea, expecting a rich In-come. *Isa. 23. 3.* Or from the Husbandman, who casts his Seed upon the Land so well watered, that he seems to cast it upon the Water, *Deut. 11. 10, 11. Isa. 32. 20.* in hope of a good Crop or Harvest, under which Metaphor, Charity is frequently prest in Scripture, *2 Cor. 9. 6. Gal. 6. 8.* Or by *Waters* understand the *Poor*, because what is given to them seems to be lost, as if it were cast into the Sea; and we are to look upon them as Waters that pass away, and never return to give us Thanks for our Charity, it is all one as to the purpose in hand: For it is clear that Charity and Beneficence to the *Poor* is the Duty here prest, and the supply to be given them is called *Bread*, because in Scripture all that is necessary for humane Life, is ordinarily comprehended under that name. *Mic. 7. 12. Adas. 6. 11.* And because *Bread* is most necessary for the *Poor*, and most common among all to be distribute, and this *Bread* must be properly their own who give it.

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The *First* Reason whereby this Duty is pressed, is taken from the gracious Reward promised to the Performers of it: For (saith he) *after many days thou shalt find it*; not as if the same very thing, which is given in Charity, would return again to the Giver, but as the Husband-man is said to get his Seed again, though he get not the same Grains which he did sow: So the Lord doth assure liberal persons, that they shall not be Losers by their Liberality, but shall get their own with Increase, either in the same kind, if He see it fit to bring them to poverty, or in a better, seeing they have lent to Him, He will repay, though He do not presently give the Harvest after the Seed time. *Ver. 1.*

Next, He presseth the same Duty in more proper terms, *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight*, where a definit number is put for an indefinit, which is a form of Expression frequent in Scripture. *Job. 5. 19. Micah, 5. 5.* and the meaning is, that we must not be wearied out of our Charity, by the multitude of the Poor, while the Lord continues His Liberality to us, only he calls it a *Portion*, because it ought to be proportioned to the number of these that call for our Charity.

And he gives a second Reason to press the same Duty, taken from the uncertainty of what Calamities may come, *Thou knowest not what evil may be upon the Earth.* The meaning whereof is, thou knowest not how soon thou mayest be deprived of Ability or Opportunity to do good with what thou hast, and put to live thy self upon the Charity of others.

Hence Learn 1. Though our Charity or Liberality to the Poor, cannot merit any thing from the Lord, seeing we can only give what He hath first freely given to us, *1 Chron. 29. 16. Luk. 17. 10.* yet the same is a step of the way, to Felicity, wherein the Lord will have His People to walk: And therefore he who would use the outward Blessings of this Life, so as his true Happiness may be promoted thereby, must not only have a Heart to use them liberally and cheerfully, so far as may

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consist with Sobriety and Holiness, for his encouragement in his Masters service, but he must also have a Heart to give out a part thereof to others in necessity: For *Solomon* having frequently prest the former, in order to Mans Happiness, he comes here to prest the latter in order to the same end, as is clear, by referring this to his general Scope, which is to direct miserable Man in the right way to his true Felicity, *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters.*

2. Though the Lords People have the only true Riches consisting in Knowledge, Wisdom, and the like; yet the Lord sees it fit that many of them be very poor as to the World, and destitute of outward Injoyments, not having so much of their own, often times as Bread to eat, or Raiment to put on, that He may try others Charity and respect to His Commands, the faith and patience of his own, and may evidence that these outward things are not his best Gifts: For it is supposed in this Exhortation, that there will be many very poor among His dearest people, whose supply He mainly calls for here, and promises largely to Reward, while he saith, *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters, and give a portion to seven, and also to eight.*

3. The Lord doth not make all His people alike Poor at once in things worldly, but while some want Bread, and other Necessaries comprehended under it, there are others who have the same, and may spare some of it for the supply of others, as is likewise supposed in this Exhortation, *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters.*

4. Though humane Laws do not ordinarily injoin Charity (and so do not punish for neglect of it) yet Gods holy Law doth; such is His respect to His Poor, that He pleads for them with the Rich, and consequently will plead in displeasure against the Rich, if they respect not this Command of His, *Cast thy Bread upon the waters, give a portion to seven and also to eight. &c.*

5. Men should give in Charity that which is their own, either by Civil Right, or as the Fruit of their Industry; when

Servants give out their Masters Goods, though for the supply of the Poor, they are not giving obedience to this Direction, *Cast thy Bread, not anothers, upon the waters.*

6. Though there be no more probability of Advantage to be had by what we give in Charity, in regard of any Recompense from the Objects themselves, than if the same were cast into the Sea to feed the Fishes (as the most part of Men esteem of all they give to the Poor) yet that should not bind up our hands from giving to the Poor, we should Give, *looking for nothing again*, from the Poor, *Luk. 14. 14.* in obedience to Him, who thus Commands, *Cast thy Bread upon the waters, give a portion, &c.*

7. Nothing is lost that is given out for God in obedience to His Command, and particularly what is given to His Poor is lent to Him, *Prov. 19. 17.* who doth here bind Himself by His promise, as it were, Surety for the Poor, that it shall come back again, and the return must be with much advantage, seeing He is so Noble and Liberal a Surety, *After many days thou shalt find it.*

8. The promised Reward of Duty doth not appear immediately upon the discharge of it, and particularly the Harvest of that Seed which is sown in ministering to the necessity of others, requires a time to ripen: that we may live by Faith, and draw our encouragement to Duty, from the promise annexed to it, which will certainly be performed: For (saith he) *After many days thou shalt find it.*

9. The multitude of the Poor, whom Providence casts in our way, should not outwary our Charity. if the Lord hath shewn His Liberality to us, though after a great number there come a greater in our way, calling in Gods Name for the supply of their Necessities, we must not repine, but give a portion to *Seven*, and when we have so done, give a portion *also for eight.*

10. Our Charity should be proportioned, not only to the Lords liberality toward us, *1 Cor. 16. 2.* But to the multitude of

of those whom we are called to help, lest if our Charity which should be like a running Fountain, not an impetuous Flood, run out too liberally upon some few, we soon exhaust it, and pre-judge others, therefore saith the Preacher *give a portion* (or as the word signifies *an equally divided part*) *to seven and also to eight.*

11. God hath veiled future Calamities from the knowledge, of men, that they may not by the fear thereof be put from present duty, but prepare for the worst, and yet by the hope of better be moved to do good while they have opportunity: For, *they know not what Evil shall be upon the Earth.*

12. Those especially who have abundance of the World among their hands, should live mindful of Calamities that may come upon them, and should be incited to duty, especially to the Exercise of Charity and Liberality to the poor, by considering that they may shortly be disabled to give, and forced to crave supply from those who now crave from them; And that those whom they now supply may be enabled to pay them home again: For this is a Reason to press Charity, *Thou knowest not what Evil shall be upon the Earth.*

13. The same Argument that Covetous Worldlings make use of to hinder themselves from their duty, they who are taught of God will make use of to stir themselves up to theirs: The Covetous Man makes this a Reason why he should give nothing to the Poor, that he knows not but evil times may come, and he may have nothing left to himself, yet the Spirit of God here teaches his people to make a contrary use of this Argument *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters, and give a Portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what Evil shall be upon the Earth.*

Ver. 3. *If the Clouds be full of Rain, they empty themselves upon the Earth: and if the Tree fall toward the South, or toward the North: in the place where the Tree falleth there it shall be.*

HERE Solomon presseth the duty of Charity by some farther Arguments. The *First* seems clearly to be taken from the Lords bounty and liberality in making his Creatures serviceable and comfortable to Man; whereof he giveth one instance for many, *if the Clouds be full of Rain they empty themselves upon the Earth*, that is, the Clouds keep not the Rain to themselves, but pour out the same freely and plentifully upon the Earth, that it may yeild Bread to Man, whereby the Lord proves his Liberality towards him: And therefore he should willingly give of his Bread to the Hungry: And this appears to be the meaning, by other places of Scripture where Charity is set forth by the same similitude, as in that of Christ pressing upon Men bounty to others, *he makes the rain to fall upon the just and unjust* Mat. 5. 45 And that of Solomon, *He that Watereth shall be watered also himself.* Prov. 11. 25.

The next Argument held out under the similitude of a *Tree lying where it falls*, is more dark, because it is variously applied to the purpose by Interpreters: And yet all that variety serveth to press the same duty of Charity. As 1. It makes for the scope if we take it thus, as the Tree, what way soever it falls, lyeth to be useful for the owner, so shall it be in the matter of Charity, where the intention is honest, and due Caution observed in the giving of it, whatever the persons be, whether good or bad upon whom it is bestowed, it shall redound to the benefit of the giver. Or 2. Thus. As a Tree is serviceable to Man, and lyeth under a kind of passive obedience to him, to be disposed of as he pleases, so should Man be moved thereby to act in obedience to his Maker, and let out a part of what he freely receives from him, for the good of others in obedience to his command. Or 3. If we apply it thus, as a Tree what way so ever it falls, there it lyes, and so it is to be found, even so is it with Man as to his Soul. he shall be for ever in that Estate wherein he falls at Death, and therefore he should in his life be doing good, that Death may find him at his duty.

Hence Learn. 1. The Lords liberality to man manifested in the ordinary course of his providence, making the Clouds to pour down Rain in abundance to make the Earth fruitful, and the fruits thereof to wait upon him to be disposed at his pleasure, should move him to Liberality toward others who are in necessity, else he may expect that these Creatures which he abuses shall witness one day against him in his Conscience, *7am. 5. 3.* And therefore from the Creatures, whether these that are above his head serving him, or these that ly at his feet ready to be employed in his service, he should learn his duty to his Maker, for so doth the Wise Man reason to press this duty of Charity, *If the Clouds be full of Rain they empty themselves upon the Earth, and if the Tree fall toward the South, or toward the North, in the place where it falleth, there it shall be.*

2. When a Man finds any of the Creatures in a passive obedience to him, ready to be employed by him for his use, and as it were offering their Service to him as a fallen Tree doth, that should make him active in his duty to his Maker, especially seeing the Creatures do not fly from him, who is naturally a fugitive from God, nor fight against him who is a Rebel to his Maker, he should move the more cheerfully in his obedience; For so much may be drawn from the similitude of a Tree lying for Mans use where it falls, here made use of as an Argument to Charity, *whether the Tree fall toward the South, or toward the North, in the place where the Tree falls there it shall be.*

3. Though there be discretion required in Charity, to know the worth of the persons upon whom it is bestowed *Pf. 112. 5.* Yet where the intention of the Giver, is Honest, and endeavours to discern what manner of persons they are to whom he gives, though he may be mistaken, and let his Charity fall upon the worst, his reward shall be no less than if it fell upon the better sort; for thus also may this similitude be turned into an Argument for Charity, as holding forth the certainty of the reward thereof, whether the Objects of it be good or bad

Bad, *If the Tree fall toward the South or toward the North, in the place where it falleth there it shall be.*

4. The consideration of this, that the eternal estate of our Souls shall be according to the condition they are found in at Death, and that Judgement will find us as Death leaves us, should make us study to lead a good life, and particularly it should stir us up to the duty of Charity, that so while we are here, we may make to our selves *Friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness* that when we fall, they may receive us into *Everlasting Habitations* Luk. 16 9. For so may this similitude also be applied, as a motive to Charity, that in whatsoever condition we are when Death by its stroak makes us fall, in that we shall be to all Eternity, *If the Tree fall toward the North, or toward the South, in the place where it falls there it shall be.*

Ver. 4. *He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the Clouds shall not reap.*

5. *As thou knowest not what is the way of the Spirit, nor how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child, even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.*

Solomon having prest the duty of Charity with several Reasons, doth here discover the weakness and insufficiency of these pretences or Objections which Men often make the ground of their delaying or neglecting altogether that duty: And these Objections are taken from the probability which Men imagine of such sad accidents to befall them, as make them fear want and Misery to themselves, if they give of their substance to the Poor, as the word of God presseth: The Weakness of all which the Wise Man clears and proves, *First*, By a Proverbial speech borrowed from foolish Husband-men, the force whereof amounts to this, that as he who upon every appearance of Rain or Wind, when he would not have them, doth

doth forbear Sowing or Reaping, will never (it is probable) either Sow or Reap: The Application of which similitude is not exprest, but may be easily gathered from the Scope, thus: Even so he who looks to all future contingencies, which may discourage, or hinder him in his duty, will readily never set about it; And particularly he that neglects Charity to others, when God calls him to it, because of every Suggestion that his Fortune may soon be exhausted, will never cast his Bread upon the Waters; and so never reap the reward promised to the performers of that duty.

Next, He shewes the Weakness of that sort of Reasoning to deter Men from their Duty, and proves they should not neglect it, though the appearance of success be never so small, by an Argument taken from the unsearchable depth of Gods Wisdom manifested in his ordinary operations, and that Men may be convinced of their Ignorance, and so not despair of the performance of what God hath promised, though they see no appearance thereof, he instances two things very near to every Man, and yet clearly understood by none. The first instance is, that Men know not the way of the Spirit, that is, they are ignorant how their own Souls are formed and united to their Bodies, how they exist and act while they are in the Body; and when they are separat from it. The other is, that none know how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child, that is, none doth clearly understand that wonderful Work, the forming of his own Body in the Womb, and from mens Ignorance of these things, he doth infer that they cannot distinctly conceive the way of Gods working for performing his promises to them that venture upon commanded duties, when there is no probability of reward for so doing. And to help them the more confidently to expect the promised reward of duty though there be no appearance of it, he represents the Lord under the notion of Creator, who gives a Being to Things that are not; And therefore Men may cheerfully follow their Duty.

Duty to him; and particularly give of their Substance for relief of his poor People, though they see no probability of Recompense for so doing.

Hence Learn 1. A faithful Minister must not only press Duty, and enforce the same by Reasons, but also he must carefully foresee what Reasons people may pretend to hinder them from Duty, or discourage them in it, and demonstrat the Levity and Weakness of every thing that may have weight with them, to make them delay their Duty, or neglect the opportunity thereof: For so doth this heavenly Preacher here, after he hath by several Reasons prest the Duty of Charity, he discovers the Hinderances thereof, and confutes these Objections which Men ordinarily make against it, whereupon they neglect or delay it, while he saith, *He that observeth the Wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the Clouds shall not reap, &c.*

2. We may expect that there will be often great Appearances of bad success in the way of our Duty; and but small of the performance of Promises that are made to the following of it, that so the sincerity of our respect to the Command, and the liveliness of our Faith in the promise of Reward may be manifested, while notwithstanding of such Discouragements we hold on in Duty. For as this Similitude implies, that the Husband-man will see many unreasonable days to hinder him from Sowing, and weaken his hopes of a good Harvest; so the application of it to the Scope of this place imports, that many things will appear and be suggested to hinder Men from the Duty of Charity (and the same holds of all other Duties) and to weaken their hopes of the performance of Promises made thereunto: *He that observeth the Wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the Clouds shall not reap, &c.*

3. We have so much natural aversion to our Duty, and so much unbelief of the promised Reward, that we are ready to make every appearance of a Difficulty, a sufficient ground to quite our Duty: For though the Weather will often be lowering,
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and the Air tempestuous, when a little after, the Season will be favourable enough; yet it is supposed that Men are very apt by such small appearances of Difficulty, to be hindered from their Duty, while the wise Man thus confutes them, even by relating their Objections under this Similitude, *He that observes the Wind shall not sow, and he that regards the Clouds shall not reap.*

4. They that do in earnest mind obedience to commanded Duties, and so would meet with the performance of the Promise made thereunto, must not ly in wait to observe Difficulties a far off, or find out what may discourage them in their Duty, nor must they regard Difficulties when they are suggested to their Minds, but when the season and opportunity of Duty comes, they must set to it, whatever appearance of bad Success there be, else they will never be for the advancement of Gods Honour, in the discharge of their Duty: For *he that observes* (or as the Word signifies, *watcheth anxiously for*) *the Wind, shall not sow, and he that regards the Clouds,* concluding it will be Rain when they seem to threaten it, *shall never reap.*

5. If Men would reason in Matters relating to their Duty to God, and their eternal Welfare, as they ordinarily do in the matters of this Life, they would not be so often hindred from their Duty, or discouraged in it, but that reasoning which hath no weight with them in things of an earthly and small Concernment, the same seems most strong in reference to the greatest matters of their Soul, and another Life: For here it is supposed, that Men do not ordinarily reason from appearance of Rain or Wind, that they should neglect to Sow or Reap, and so of other things, else they would seldom or never do what they are seldom or never found to neglect in the ordinary season thereof; and yet that they do too frequently from any appearance of hard Events reason, that they must neglect necessary Duties, particularly that of Charity here press, *He*

that observes the Wind shall not sow, and he that regards the Clouds shall not reap.

6. There is so much Wisdom manifested in all the Works of God, and we are so blind, and spend so much of the little Wit we have upon other things, that there is not any of these works, that can be fully comprehended by us: this is clearly supposed in the other Branch of *Solomons* Confutation of the delay or neglect of Duty, upon appearance of bad success, *as thou knowest not, &c. for thou knowest not the work of God who maketh all.*

7. Man is of so wonderful a Constitution, that it will conquer his Understanding to comprehend himself: And therefore while he reflects upon himself he should be humbled that he can know but little of these two principal Parts, whereof he is composed, the way of the forming of his Soul, its union with, and acting by the several Organs of his Body, the way how his Body was formed in the Womb, how so many rare, and far differing Organs, and Members of so various operations should arise out of so inconsiderable a matter of one kind and colour, and that of the same, Bones should grow, without which Man would creep upon the Earth as Worms do. Women that Bear Children, and all that are born of Women, should humbly admire and adore the wonderful Art and Wisdom of God, in framing both their Spirits and Bodies, and thereby be moved to adventure upon Duty to Him, being confident that He who made them so wonderfully, can easily prevent imminent Hazards in the way of their Duty, and bring about the performance of His Promises, though they see not how the same can be. For here the incomprehensible Wisdom of God, manifested in forming of the Spirits and Bodies of Men, is brought as a motive to the Duty of Charity; and to make Men charitable (so to speak) of God, that He can easily prevent their Fears of Loss and Want, make up their Losses, and make good His own Promises, *As thou knowest not the*

the way of the Spirit, nor how the Bones grow in the Womb of her that is with Child, so thou knowest not the Work of God that maketh all things.

8. However our ignorance of Gods way of working, so far as the same may be known, ought to humble us; yet the knowledge of our ignorance may be useful for us, and may teach us to follow our Duty in hope of the promised Reward, though we see no probability that the same may be brought about: For *Solomon* brings our ignorance of God's working, as an Argument to convince us of Folly, in desisting from Duty; because we see not how we shall be Rewarded as He hath promised, and to put us to our Duty in every opportunity thereof, considering that God, who is infinit in Power and Wisdom, can easily prevent our Fears of Loss or Hazard in the way of our Duty, and bring about the performance of His own Promises, though we see not how it may be done, *As thou knowest not the way of the Spirit, &c. so thou knowest not the work of God who maketh all.*

9. The Consideration of Gods infinit Power should make us hope against all appearances of the contrary; that His Promises shall be made out to us, and so follow our Duty, though we see no appearance of success: For while *Solomon* is discovering and guarding against the cause of our neglecting Duty, namely our ignorance of Gods way of working, in bringing about the performance of His Promises, which is often contrary to appearance, he describes the Lord from His infinit Creating Power, *Thou knowest not the work of him who maketh all.*

10. Gods efficacious Providence in bringing about the performance of His Promises, as it is secret and unseen to us; so it operats constantly, and that so certainly, that there shall be no miscarriage of the effect intended by Him: Therefore is the same here set forth by His way of forming the Spirits and Bodies of Men, which as it is very secret, so it is constantly

going on, *As thou knowest not the way of the Spirit, or how the Bones do grow in the Womb of her that is with Child, so thou knowest not the work of God which maketh all,*

VER. 6. *In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, or whether they shall be both alike good.*

THese words may be safely taken for an Exhortation to the speedy and constant performance of all Duties of Holiness in general, seeing the same is often prest in Scripture, under this Metaphor of Sowing, *Hos. 10. 12. Gal. 6. 7.* only it seems most suitable to the Scope, to take them with a special reference to the Duties of Charity; and so, while he saith, *In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening withhold not thy hand,* the meaning is, that we should be frequently at our Duty, taking hold of every opportunity thereof, that we should enter the way of Wel-doing in the Morning of our Life, and not weary of it even when the Evening of Old Age is come; and particularly that we should be frequent and indefatigable in the discharge of the Duties of Charity: And this he presseth by a Reason, *For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, &c.* which is not to be understood, as if the Lords people were uncertain of any fruit or success of their Duty, seeing he hath assured them in his Word, that in due season they shall Reap if they faint not, and consequently there can be no ground here for that Gloss which Popish Interpreters put upon this Expression, as if the meaning were, that there could be no comfortable assurance of Gods accepting or rewarding of our Duty, attained to in this Life, but it is to be understood of our Ignorance and uncertainty of the Success of every Duty, as to the particular effect intended by us: As for example, if it be applied to the success of Duty in general; The meaning

meaning is, that we are uncertain whether that Comfort and Satisfaction we aim at, shall be found in this, or in the other particular Performance, or in both of them, or in none of them, but in some other than that wherein we mainly expect it, or if it be applied to the Duty of Charity, the uncertainty is in reference to the right improvement or use making of our Charity, by the party to whom it is given, and to the Lords testifying of his Acceptance of this, or the other particular act of Charity.

And if it be enquired, What strength hath the Argument drawn from our Ignorance or Uncertainty of these, to enforce the Duty of Charity? It may be answered, 1. That the words suppose an uncertainty only of Success as to every act of Duty, but do suppose a certainty of Success in some: For he saith not thou knowest not whether *any thing* thou doest shall prosper, but thou knowest not *whether* shall prosper, *this or that*. And 2. It is an Argument in so far as our being uncertain but that there may be success of every act of Duty, is ground and reason of going about Duty at all occasions, seeing Acceptance in the general, and the future Reward is made sure to us.

Hence Learn 1. A Christians following of commanded Duties, is fitly compared to the sowing of Seed, it being a painful exercise in the mean time, and seeming rather a Losing than a Gaining, there being no present appearance of Fruit, and it will at last, where it is sincerely gone about, bring a rich Increase: For under this Metaphor, is Duty here, and elsewhere in Scripture prest, *In the Morning sow thy Seed, &c.*

2. Every commanded Duty is so contrary to our unrenewed Part, and we are so prone to think much of the least thing we do, that we are very ready to sit up, and give over our Duty, after we have begun fair, and made some good progress therein, unless by the word enlivened by the Spirit of him that spoke it, we be frequently quickened and excited to our Duty.

Duty, for to work some sense of our proneness to sit up, and to incite us to perseverance and frequency in Duty, especially such as take any thing of our worldly substance from us, is this Exhortation given, *In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening with-hold not thy hand.*

3. Our Obligations to God are so many, and the strength allowed us so lutable to what may be accepted, and the Reward promised so glorious, that we should never think we have done enough in any Duty, but even to the Evening of every day, and to the very Evening of our Life, we should still be ready to do some farther service to God, *In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening with-hold not thy hand.*

4. Although the Lord have given his People abundant encouragement in his Service, by assuring them that he doth accept, and will reward the same; yet he hath left them uncertain, as to the temporal success of particular Duties, or as to the effect they intend upon others by them: As for Example, Whether a Minister shall by this or that Sermon, or part of his pains, Convince and Convert such and such Souls; or whether this or that particular Act of Charity, shall provoke the party on whom it is bestowed, to Praise: And this the Lord doth, that he may try the sincerity of our Obedience to his Commands, and the reality of our Faith in the promised Reward: For in the forementioned sense is the Uncertainty here spoken of, mainly to be understood, *Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.*

5. Our uncertainty of the desired success of every particular Duty, should be so far from making us neglect the discharge thereof, that on the contrary, the same should make us more assiduous and frequent therein, since we are sure of Gods approbation, and a Reward at last of all our Pains in his Service, if the Merchant whose hopes have the instability of Fortune to struggle with, doth adventure some part of his Stock in several Vessels, and the Husband-man, who is not certain that
every

every grain he sows will grow up, yet both hold on in their duty in hope of success; How much more should Christians, who have better grounds of certainty that their Labour shall not be in vain, be assiduous and constant in their duty, how doubtful soever they be of the temporal success of this, or that particular duty: For this he makes a motive to provoke those who have the promise of success at last, to constancy and frequency in duty, *thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, whether they both shall be alike good.*

Ver. 7. Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun.

8. But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of Darkness, for they shall be many: all that cometh is vanity.

IN this second part of the Chapter which is the beginning of the last part of this Book, the Preacher applies his whole Doctrine, and presseth the principal use thereof, which is that men should make serious and timous preparation for Death, Judgement and Eternity: And for this end because that which mainly diverts Men from this study is the apprehension they have of much pleasure in things Earthly: Therefore he doth *Proff.* By way of concession yield to Men, that there is some sweetness and pleasure in the enjoyment of Creature comforts: For, by the *Sweetness of the Light, and pleasantness for beholding the Sun,* are meant, all the Comforts of this present Life, which make it Sweet and Pleasant.

Next, Upon supposition that Men have never so long a Life, and the same never so much sweetened by the enjoyment of Creature comforts, he presseth upon them, that they should remember Death, as certainly abiding them, and consequently prepare for it: For by *the days of darkness which are many,* is chiefly meant the state of Death, so called, because under it Men are deprived of those Earthly Comforts, which are set forth

orth by the pleasantness of the Light, and sweetness of beholding the Sun: And by the same also may be understood, the Eternity of the Wicked's Torment, because that is most fitly signified by the *many days of Darkness*, and the consideration thereof is most powerful to stir up Men to prepare for Death.

Thirdly. He passeth sentence upon those Earthly Comforts, which so take up the Hearts of Men, that thoughts of Death are banished, while he saith, *all that cometh is Vanity*, the meaning whereof is, that all Creature-comforts without the spiritual and sanctified use of them, whereby Men are led to Comforts of a higher nature, are empty of any true satisfaction, they are fading, and useless in order to a Mans true Happiness.

Hence Learn. 1. Though the Lord might justly have made this Life bitter. and a begun Hell to all the posterity of Adam, and doth see it fitting to imbitter it to some of his own dearest Children, that they may long for a better, *Joh. 14. 13. 14.* And to others, that they may be punished for seeking their Happiness in this *Deut. 28. 28.* yet generally he hath imprinted sweetness and comfort on Mans Condition here, that he may prove himself bountiful to all, incite them to his praise, and lead them to Repentance, Man hath himself to blame for any bitterness that is in his Lot: For, that the Lord doth afford matter of Sweetness and Comfort to every Man is imported in this concession, *Truely the Light is sweet,, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun.*

2. Though the choicest of Earthly Comforts are to be undervalued, in comparison of those that are Spiritual and Heavenly, and as Men satiate themselves with them for their portion, yet in themselves, and in reference to the use which Man should make of them. *viz.* to be thereby encouraged in his Masters service, and induced to seek after Comforts of a better nature, they are to be esteemed of and commended: For so doth *Solomon* here commend all lawful outward Comforts, while he saith, *truly the Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun.*

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3. When the Lord prolongs a Mans Life, and gives him many outward Comforts, and few crosses along the same, he is then very ready to forget Death and Eternity, and neglect to prepare for them; and the nearer he draw toward them, to be the more unmindful of them, therefore the Spirit of God finds it necessary to mind Man in this case of Death and Eternity, *But if a Man live many Years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of Darknes.*

4. It is Mens Wisdom timoussly to intertain thoughts of Death and Eternity, and while they have health, and their natural Spirits are vigorous, to set about Duties wherein true preparation for these doth consist, and to mix thoughts of that kind, with the most pleasant passages of their Life, that they may be kept from excess in the use of Earthly delights, and may not put off such thoughts and duties, as Melancholious and painful, till Death and Eternity be drawing near: For, as appears by the following purpose, this exhortation is mainly directed to such as have much of their time before them, *yet let him remember the Days of Darknes, for they shall be many.*

5. The comfortless estate of wicked Men after Death, and the duration of their Torment, so far as Men in their thoughts can follow the same along Eternity, should be often and seriously thought upon by all that would spend their time aright, that so, for momentany sinful pleasures, they may not adventure upon those many days of Darknes: For, by this expression, is mainly represented the comfortless state of wicked Men, to all Eternity, *let him remember the days of Darknes for they are many.*

6. How prosperous and successful soever the event of outward things may be to an unreconciled Man, even though he should have all the hopes and desires of his Heart, all will prove empty of true satisfaction to him, and therefore while things of that sort, such as Riches, Honours, and pleasures, are

coming never so fast upon him, he should still be thinking them empty of satisfaction and evanid: For how great soever his incomings be, yet saith the Spirit of God to him, *let him remember that-----all that cometh is vanity.*

Ver. 9. *Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into Judgement.*

10. *Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for Child-hood and youth are vanity*

HERE the Preacher doth particularly apply his former exhortation, anent timous preparation for Death and Eternity, to Young Men, who are most prone to put off the thoughts thereof, and most bent upon their Earthly pleasures, And so labours to stop them in their violent pursuit of these.

And this he doth *First*, By a Holy kind of scorn, and mocking of their Carnal Mirth, a way of speaking which is often found in Holy Scripture, and cannot be taken for any approbation, or allowance of Men, in their sinful Pleasures, much less a provocation of them to more of that kind: But is made use of. 1. To bring forth to Men the language of their own Hearts, and that which one of them speaks to another, so that Holy Irony of the most Holy, *Gen. 3 22. Behold, the man is become as one of us* &c. is made use of to represent to Man his boldness in Sin, and what a height of Wickedness his heart intended. 2. It is used to suggest to Mens hearts, what in justice they may expect if they go on in their sinful ways after warning, even no less than to be given up judicially by the Lord, and to have this Language spoken to them by him in his great displeasure, for we find also this form of speech used to Men who are madly resolved to go on in their sinful ways. 3 *Chron.* 25 8. And so it is used here to Men who did Rejoice in their Foolish Youthful Lusts, who did encourage and provoke their

their own Hearts, and one another, to more and more delight therein, withholding nothing of satisfaction to their sensual pleasures which they could attain to, making their own inclination the rule of their walk, and so did justly deserve to be given up of God to their own Hearts Lusts, and that he say to them, *let him that is filthy be filthy still.*

Next, He labours to reclaim them by certifying them of a Judgement to come, wherein they behoved to appear, and and give an account of all such sinful motions and courses as they have entertained and followed.

Thirdly. He endeavours their reclaiming by a serious and grave exhortation, to the study of Reformation, held forth in two Expressions. The one is that they should *remove Sorrow from their Hearts*, they thought to do this by their sinful pleasures, but he imports they were increasing grief to themselves, and *Wrath* (as the word translated *Sorrow* signifies) even the wrath of God against their own Souls. The other expression explains the way how they should *remove Sorrow from their heart*, to wit, by *putting away evil from their Flesh*, whereby is meant the forsaking of these sinful pleasures, in the accomplishing whereof, the *Flesh*, or outward man, is mainly instrumental.

And *Fourthly* he doth endeavour the same, by a reason taken from the vanity or sinfulness of Mens Conception and Birth, which should move them to cry for a change of their nature: for the first word translated *Child-hood* relates to Mens Conception and the time between that and their Birth, and the other translated *Youth* relates to their Birth and some time following, for it signifies the Morning or break of day; both which are full of sinful vanity, rather to be lamented than continued in.

Hence Learn. 1. Those who give up themselves to their sinful pleasures, may justly fear that God shall give them up also to follow their own way, to their eternal ruine, and that as they scorn his pains, and often mock his Messengers, so he shall mock them, and scorn the Scorners: For, this Holy Irony

is to beget Fears in their Hearts, lest God give them utterly up to themselves. *Rejoice, O young Man in thy youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy Heart, &c.*

2. Where Gods powerful renewing Grace hath not lighted upon Mens Heart, they will not only take pleasure in Sin, but they will provoke themselves to more and more wickedness, and if Light or Conscience would inake reluctancy, they will spurr their Hearts over the Belly of it, and will *with-hold themselves* from nothing which gives present satisfaction, were it never so dishonourable to God, and destructive to their Souls Peace and Felicity. For this Ironical Speech expresses the language of a bold Sinners Heart to himself. *Rejoice in thy youth, and let thy Heart cheer thee, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes.*

3. Christs Ministers must study variety of Strains for reclaiming of Sinners, sometimes they must labour to terrifie by Threatnings, sometimes allure by Promises, as Solomon hath done before, and sometimes labour to make Men ashamed by Holy Ironies, and scorning of their scornful Carriage, and speak to them in their own strain, as they use to speak to their own Hearts, and one to another, providing they do thereby intend their Reclamation, not their Irritation, that they be not desirous of a woful day upon them, that they intertain Pity and Grief in their Hearts, to see Men going cheerfully to their own Ruine, and that they intermix with their strain, informations of their Hazard, and loving Counsels, expressing some hope of them, and holding forth to them the way how they may be reclaimed, as here this heavenly Preacher doth. *Rejoice, O young Man, &c. But know God will bring thee to Judgment, therefore remove Sorrow from thy Heart, &c.*

4. When Men have abundance of earthly Pleasures, and are in a capacity to enjoy the sweetness of them, they are then in great hazard to banish all serious Thoughts of Death and the last

last Judgement: For this *Memento* imports, that such have need to be minded thereof. *But know thou that God will bring thee into Judgements*

5. The serious and believing Consideration of that Great Day of Judgement, is a special Means to abate Mens eagerness in the pursuit of their carnal Pleasures: And therefore Ministers should be serious and frequent in stirring them up to the consideration of it. For the Spirit of God finds this to be most pertinent to be put as a Bridle in the Jaws of insolent Youth, to restrain it from excess in carnal Pleasures. *But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgement.*

6. There will be no shifting of Compearance at the Judgement Seat of Christ, were Men never so unwilling to sit themselves there, compear they must. *Know thou that God will bring thee in to Judgement.*

7. The last Judgement will be so exact, that not the least sinful motion of wicked Mens Hearts, shall pass without notice, and deserved Punishment; Men must not only give account thereof of their gross out-breaking Sins, but of their inward cheering and encouraging their Hearts to follow these Sins; For speaking of young Mens cheering their Hearts in their wicked Courses, and in the sight of their Eyes, he saith, *For all these things God shall bring thee in to Judgement.*

8. Though deluded Sinners dream, that their delighting in their Lusts, and banishing the Thoughts of Judgement to come, is the way to remove Sorrow from their Hearts; yet the truth is, by their so doing, they are contracting Sorrow and Heaviness, and depriving themselves of their true spiritual Comfort and Joy; provoking the Lord to Wrath against them, and drinking down that sweet Poison, which within a litle will bring much Sorrow to their Hearts; except by sincere Confession it be cast up again. For the Man to whom he speaks Verse 9, as cheering his own Heart in his Sin, and banishing Thoughts of Judgement, he supposes here in the 10 Verse, to have much

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Sorrow at his Heart, to wit, much Guile which will end in Sorrow, and so much matter of *Wash*, as the Word translated Sorrow signifies, while he saith, *Therefore remove Sorrow from thy Heart*. Though the mortifying and reforming of these Evils, which Mens corrupt Nature (often signified in Scripture by the Word *Flesh*) incites them unto, and their outward Man and Members thereof (which Scripture also expresses by that Name) doth act and accomplish, seem to them the most unpleasant and painful Exercises in the World, yet are they in effect the only way to remove Sorrow, and consequently to bring in true Joy and Peace to the Soul: For this last Expression may be looked upon as holding forth the way of attaining to what is prest in the former, namely the removal of Sorrow from the Heart, *And put away evil from thy Heart*.

10. Men will never rightly reform the Ills of their practice, especially Sins of their Youth, till they be sensible of their Original Pollution, which doth encline them to sinful Courses, even from the very Morning of their Life, or (as the Word translated Youth signifies) the breaking of the Day of their being in the World: For Original Sinfulness is held forth in this Expression, which is brought in as a Reason why Men should be serious in reforming their actual Transgressions: *For Childhood and Youth are vanity*.

11. The sinful Delights of Youth are transitory, and those hot furious Motions of Passion, Lust, and the like, will soon vanish; the consideration whereof should move Men to the study of Mortification timously, that they may leave their Lust, ere their Lusts leave them: For the Vanity here spoken of, is mainly to be understood of the transitoriness and speedy vanishing of youthly Pleasures, and the same is brought in as an Argument for the study of Reformation. *For Childhood and Youth are vanity*.

CHAP. XII.

THE ARGUMENT

IN the First Part of this Chapter contained to the 8 Verse, the Preacher continueth his purpose begun in the end of the last Chapter, which is to stir up Men to a serious and timous preparation for Death and Judgement: And in order thereto doth (1) press the exercise of a Duty very fit and necessary for that end, to Remember their Creator, &c. ver. 1. where (1) we have the Duty it self, which is to Remember, a Word importing a clear up-taking of God and His Attributes, an affectionat and cordial Trusting in Him, and an Engagement to the Duties of New Obedience. ver. 1. 2. The season fittest for discharge of that Duty, not only the present Now, but the time of Youth. ver. 1. And 3. The Argument whereby he presseth this Duty, taken from the sad Condition that every Man is to expect under Old Age, with reference to the Trouble and Afflictions incident to it, and the continuance of these Afflictions upon him, and the Language that such will have at such a time, far different from what they had in their Youth. ver. 1. 2. He doth negatively describe the fittest Opportunities for the performance of these Duties necessary, in order to the preparing for Death, as that it should not be deferred till the Miseries of Old Age creep on, nor till the frequent Returns of outward afflictions, especially Diseases. ver. 2. In the dimness of the bodily Eyes, the usefulness of external Lights, and the failing of the Reason, held forth by the Allegories of the Sun, Moon and Stars, being darkned, and in the continual succession (as one Cloud or Shower after another cometh in time of Winter) of one Trouble after another. ver. 2. 3. The Preacher positively evinceth the time of Old Age not to be so fit an Opportunity for making peace with God, in order to preparation for Death, as the time of Youth and Health, an old Man's Body being so beleagured with Death (as a beleagured Castle) that the Arms and Hands (called the Keepers of the House) do shake, the Legs and Thighs (the strong Men) grow feeble, the Teeth (the Grinders) turn few, loose, and unfit for preparing Meat for the Stomach, and the Eyes (which look out at their Holes as Windows) grow dim and weak. ver. 3. 4. He by several other Metaphors, describeth the dissolution of this House of Clay, or earthly Tabernacle, as by the Shutting of the Doors in the Street, importing the unfitness of the Mouth and Lips to speak, or Throat (which are the Doors of the Tabernacle) to let down Meat, By the low sounding of the Grinders, hold-

holding out the small noise Old Men, throw want or weakness of their Teeth, make in their Eating, by his rising at the Voice of the Bird, thereby signifying the unsoundness of his Sleep, and by the Daughters of Musick brought low, thereby discovering the weakness of all these Organs of the Body, made use of either in uttering, or receiving of melodious Sounds. ver. 4. By Old and Dying Men their being afraid of that which is high, and their Fears in the way, insinuating their want of Strength and Courage, by the flourishing of the Almond Tree, holding forth the increase of Gray Hairs, as a fore-runner of Death, by the Grasshoppers being a Burden, shewing their Weakness to be such, as that the weights of a Flie shall be a trouble to them. And by the failing of the Desire, both after lawful and unlawful Objects. ver. 5. The ground of all which is, because Man is going to his unchangable Estate. ver. 5. and his Friends have given him over for dead, and begun their mourning for him. ver. 5. By the loosing of the Silver Cord, holding forth the decay of the natural Life; and Spirits, or Marrow of the Back-bone and Arteries of the Heart, which thence convey the Spirits to other places of the Body. By the breaking of the Golden Bowl, whereby is meant the Skin containing the Brain, which having the Pores of it much opened to admit of what is prejudicial, foretokeneth a Decay of the Body in old age. By the Breaking of the Pitcher at the Fountain, by which is meant the obstruction of a Vein, in the form of a Pitcher coming from the Liver (here called the Fountain) betokening Decay and Death. ver. 6. and by the Wheel broken at the Cistren, by which is meant the Lungs, which as a Wheel are in continual motion, till by watry Humours and Flegm falling down in the Stomach, they be impeded, and so brings Decay and Death. ver. 6. All which drives the Preachers Scope in the ver. 1. to prepare for Death in time before these things fall out, by remembering their Creator in the days of Youth. And 5. This First part of the Chapter is shut up in giving a short sum (the Tabernacle being dissolved, as is before described) of Mans future state, both as to the Body, that it being Dust in its first original, returns thereto till the Resurrection; and also as to the Soul, called here the Spirit, because of their immaterial substance and resemblance to God, that it shall return to God to be disposed of eternally by Him. Which also may perswade to the Duty of preparing for Death. ver. 7.

In the Second Part of this Chapter from ver. 8. to the end, the Preacher sums up this purpose, and the whole Book, wherein 1. He asserts (as the substance of this Book) the vanity and insufficiency of all humane Things, for directing Man to true Happiness. ver. 8. 2. He commends the purpose contained in this Book, 1. From the Preacher himself and his qualification of Wisdom. ver. 9. As from the Improvement be made of this for the good of the Church. ver. 9. As from his Diligence and Assiduity in his Work. ver. 9. As from his not resting in any measure attained, but seeking out carefully for more, as from his watchfulness and giving good heed. ver. 9. As from his orderly digesting of his matter. ver. 9.

so from his dexterity in reducing Purposes to short and grave Sentences or Proverbs. ver. 9. 2. From the Qualities of the Doctrine by him delivered. ver. 10. viz. The desirableness of the words and matter, ver. 10. The approvableness and uprightness of the purpose, ver. 10. And the firmness and truth thereof, ver. 10. All which commend his Doctrine as being Desirable to move the Affection, Upright to reform and direct the Practice, and True to inform the Judgement and perswade Belief. And 3. He commends the purpose of this Book. 1. From the Efficacy of it, with reference not only to the Doctrine revealed in this Book, but to all Truth in general. ver. 11. As being powerful to excite (as a Goad) people to their Duty. ver. 11. And to establish and fix Men (as Nails) in the ways of God. ver. 11. And 2. From the authority of it, as being given by, and derived from Christ Jesus the one Shepherd. ver. 11. And 3. In the conclusion of this Book and Purpose, he exhorteth to the right Improvement of it, and the purposes therein. ver. 12. Wherein 1. He giveth his Readers a loving compellation of a Son, thereby to insinuat upon their affections. ver. 12. 2. He sheweth the right use of these words and purposes, even to be admonished by them. ver. 12. And 3. He presseth this by two Reasons, the 1. is, That if Men follow not these Directions, they will be endless and fruitless (as in writing many Books) in their Inquiries after other things and ways. And the 2 Reason is from the sad effect, even to the flesh of these vain Imaginations and Enquiries. ver. 11. Yea 4. In this Conclusion of the Book he giveth the Scope of all this Doctrine delivered, ver. 13. which 1. He presseth on his own Heart and the Hearts of others. ver. 13. 2. He branches out the substance of his whole Doctrine in two Duties, the 1. is the Fear of God. The 2. is the Keeping of His Commandments. ver. 13. And 3. He presseth these Duties by two Arguments, the first whereof is in this ver. 13. As being the short sum of all that God requireth of, and worketh in Man, and wherewith they should be wholly employed. ver. 13. The second Reason, whereby the study of these great Duties is pressed, is taken from the certainty, terribleness and exactness of the last Judgement, contained in ver. last: And therefore whoever design to be truly Happy, should forbear the following of lying Vanities within time, and give themselves to the study and exercise of Fearing God and keeping His Commandments, wherein true preparation for Death and Eternity does consist.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw neigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

THe Scope of this Heavenly Preacher in the first part of this Chapter being to stir up Men to make timely preparation for Death and Judgement, he doth in this verse First press that Exercise which mainly fits Men for appearing before their Judge, in these words *Remember thy Creator*: Whereby according to the frequent use of the word in Scripture is meant, that Men should labour to intertain such clear thoughts of the properties of God, particularly his power and terrour, *Neb. 4. 14.* His grace and love *Cant. 1. 4.* as use to be blest for leading Men to Repentance *Pf. 22. 27.* drawing their hearts to trust in the Lord *Pf. 10. 7.* and engaging them to his praise *Pf. 97. 12.* and to all duties of new obedience *Deut. 8. 11.* and while he presseth this Exercise on Men, he represents the Lord to them as Creator, not to exclude other considerations of him, as useful to be remembered by them, but because under this consideration he is naturally known to Men, and the same is very effectual for moving them to live to him from whom they have their being, and constantly to depend upon him, from whom they have their daily preservation, which is to them a continued Creation.

Next, He points out the season fittest for the discharge of of this duty, and that is the present *Now*, and especially the days of Mens *youth*, not as if these who have never gone about this duty till Youth be past, were not here spoken to, but because the time of Mens Youth is of all other the fittest for that Exercise.

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And *Thirdly*, He presseth the present use making of this opportunity by a reason (which is much enlarged in the following words) taken from the sad times which every Man may expect under Sicknels and *Old Age*, and this he sets forth in two expressions: The one is, *while the evil days come not*, whereby he means the days of Affliction which are called by that name elsewhere in Scripture *P/ 49. 5*. The other is, *and the years wherein thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them*, whereby is meant the time of the long continuance of trouble, which every man should prepare for toward the evening of his Life, in which neither sinful pleasures, nor the most lawful earthly delight, shall be sweet to men, but they shall be forced to express as they shall be able, their loathing of the same, and therefore seeing all men ought to expect such a time as this before them, it is every mans Wisdom, to study that which may yeild true pleasure and comfort to his heart in the worst times that can come, and that is only Gods favour and fellowship to be found in the way of his fear and obedience. afterward recommended.

Hence Learn, 1. It is not the naked contemplation, or bare notions of God and his properties, that will prepare men rightly for Death, or yeild them true comfort at that time, but it is the *Heart-affecting* and practical meditation of him, whereby men cherish such thoughts of him as draw forth their affections upon him, and make them frame their walk to his Honour, for that is the force of the original word, both according to the propriety of the original language, and the use of it in Scripture as was cleared in the Exposition, *Remember thy Creator.*

2. Though there be no consideration of God, under which the Scripture holds him out, which is not useful and profitable for us, yet these of his sovereignty and omnipotency, which the Relation of a Creator offers to reasonable Creatures, should be most frequently cherished, especially by men who have strong passions and Lusts to be mortified, and great dis-

couragements to grapple with in the way of their duty, that so they may take him up as One able easily to subdue these Lusts, and make a new Creation upon their Souls, or if they continue voluntary Slaves to them, able to destroy them being their Creator, and if they give themselves up to his obedience, able to bear them thorow all difficulties 1 Pet. 4. 19. and to create peace and comfort in their Spirits, to make up the loss of any comfort they can renounce for his sake //ai. 57. 18. 19. for which and the like reasons we may conceive the Lord as Creator, recommended to the remembrance of Men who have strongest Lusts unsubdued, and apprehend greatest difficulty in renouncing the pleasures of them, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*

3. It is not possible to get the Heart drawn from Earthly delights, and so engaged to the fear and obedience of the Lord, unless it be stayed upon him, and replenished with frequent thoughts of his properties, which will bring in so much Holy awe of him, and such apprehensions of sweetness to be had in him, that sinful pleasures will appear to be but Husks; or Swins food in comparison thereof, and the Soul will not dare to feed upon these Husks, if it have clear and frequent thoughts of the sovereignty and power of God; the Creator, for having dissuaded from carnal pleasures, in the close of the former Chapter, and being afterward in this to recommend to the study of living in the fear of obedience of the Lord, as the only way to true Happiness, he doth here press this, *Remember thy Creator*, as the best way to divert the Heart, from the one, and engage it to the other.

4. The time of *Youth* is the fittest time for the study of Reconciliation with God, and walking in his fear and obedience; then the wit and memory are ripest, and the affections most vigorous, and therefore should be spent in that study which only is worthy of them, especially considering that it is but just with God to reject Men, though they should offer themselves

selves to him, when they have given the flower of their time Wit, Strength, and affections to the service of Satan, and their Lusts, and that, if he should accept of them, the remembrance of their mis-spent Youth will be extremely heavy, and will readily occasion in the best, fears of off-casting in old age, compare Ps. 25. 7. with Ps. 71. 18. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth.*

5. As there is a natural propensitie in all to forget God and to shift serious thoughts of him, and therefore all Men have need of a Remembrancer to mind them often of this great duty prest in the Text, so of all others Young men are most apt to forget God, and put off serious thoughts of him and their own Souls, their Lusts being strongest, and their Hearts most capable of the sweetness of Earthly delights, so that the Ministers of Christ though they have often least hope of success in dealing with Wanton, Proud, Insolent and furious Youth, yet must they press this Duty upon them, and urge them in the name of the Lord to make use of the present opportunity for it, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth.*

6. However days of affliction, Old Age, and Infirmary, be good Days to those who have made their Peace with God *Hab. 3. 17. Rom. 8. 28.* yet are they evil Days in themselves, and will prove no better than a begun Hell to them who still defer the study of making their Peace with God: For so the Preacher describes the times of Affliction which befall Men especially toward Death, calling the same *evil Days, while the evil days come not.*

7. While Men have Health and Strength, and immunity from Trouble, they should be forecasting evil Days and unpleasant years, that so in the Summer and Harvest of Youth and Strength, they may be making Provision for the Stormy Winter of Affliction and Old Age, *Prov. 10. 9.* by ensuring the pardon of their Sins thorow the Blood of Christ, which else will

will readily compels them about as unpardoned, in such times *Psal. 49. 5.* And so making clear their interest in God, which is the only Consolation in *Evil Days*, *Hab. 3. 17.* For, *Solomon* supposes here every Young Man to have Evil Days, and Years of Trouble before him, which he should forecast, and thereby be moved to prepare tinuously for them, *Remember &c. while the Evil Days come not, and the Years &c.*

8. The Lord will once make Earthly Delights tasteless and loathsome to Men before they go out of this Life; he doth it to the Godly. *2 Sam. 19. 34 35.* that divine Consolations may relish the better with them, and they may long for the pleasures that are at his right hand: And to the Wicked also, *Dan. 5. 5. 6.* that they may see their Folly in satisfying themselves with these things only, which cannot give them any comfort when they have most need of it: And so, often gains a Testimony from both good and bad, that Earthly Delights are unworthy to be delighted in: For, *Solomon* supposes here that there is a time for every Man, wherein he shall say, *I have no Pleasure in them.*

9. Christs Ministers should be so well acquainted with the Language of dying Men, both by their daily observing of the case of such, and their study of the Scriptures which will inform them of it *Prov. 5. 11. 1 Thes. 5. 3.* that they may be able to inform Men who have least mind of Death, what sentence they will pass in their own Conscience, and what Language they shall readily utter to others concerning their sinful pleasures, when they shall be drawing near to the Gates of Death, that so they may the more effectually prevail with them to renounce in time these Sinful Pleasures: For, *Solomon* here represents to the voluptuous Young Man, who is cheering up his Heart in his Sins, and banishing the thoughts of Death, what he shall say of his Youthly Pleasures, when Sicknes comes and Death draws near, *Thou shalt say I have no Pleasure in them.*

Ver. 2. *While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not darkened, nor the Clouds return after the Rain.*

THe Preacher doth here farther describe negatively the fittest opportunity for the study of Reconciliation and Peace with God, and withal doth more particularly describe the Miseries incident to Old Age, as to the loss of outward Comforts, and frequent returns of Diseases at that time. This being clear, and generally agreed upon by Interpreters to be the Scope of this place, we need not be very anxious concerning the particular application of the Allegories here made use of to set forth this purpose.

First, By the *Darkening of the Sun, the Light, the Moon and Stars*, may be safely understood, the eclipsing or withdrawing of all earthly Comforts (seeing the Scripture sets out a comfortless state this way) and it may comprehend particularly, 1. The darkening of the dying Mans bodily Eyes. And so 2. Of all external *Lights* to him, as to any Comfort he may reap from them. As also 3. The decaying of his *Reason*, and such Faculties of his Soul, as are in a manner answerable to the Celestial Lights. And likewise 4. The failing of all outward Comforts, both greater and lesser: It is clear the loss of all these accompanies dying Men, and so they may be all comprehended here as parts and enlargements of one and the same sense of the words.

Next. By the *Returning of the Clouds after Rain*, seems clearly to be understood, that continual Succession, and frequent returning of one Shower of Trouble after another, which befall dying Men: And the Allegory or Similitude seems to be borrowed from the tempestuous and stormy Seasons of the Year, when it is not as in Summer, that after a Shower clears up again, and becomes fair and Warm, which represents the time of Youth, in which ordinarily after some fit of Sickness and Distemper, comes Ease and Health again: But as it is in

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Winter, after one Shower the Clouds presently gather for another; so will it be in the time of Old Age. As for that Particular which many condescend upon as intended here, to wit, the frequent falling down of Rheums or Catarrhes from the Head, like so many Showers upon the Lungs, that seems to be but one Instance of this general, to wit, the frequent recurring of one Fit of Distemper after another, incident to dying Men.

Hence Learn 1. It is not enough for Men to have general Apprehensions of their Mortality, and the certainty of their Death, but it is necessary that their Thoughts be stayed upon the Distinct, and particular Apprehension of the Case they shall be in, at that time, while the several Pinnas of their Tabernacle shall be a loosning, that by a serious and considerat view of their Case then, they may be stirred up to provide suitable spiritual Consolations against the removal of every one of their outward Comforts: Therefore is it that *Solomon* after a general Intimation in the former Verse, that Death and Trouble are before Men, he comes here more particularly to lead them to distinct Thoughts of the Case they shall be in then, *While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not darkened.*

2. The benefit of our Eyes, and of the Light of the Sun, as also our Reason, and other Faculties of the Soul, together with the Comforts we have by the use of all these, are excellent Mercies of God, and while they are continued with us, do put us in a good capacity to prepare for Death: While we have the use of our bodily Eyes, and our Reason, we may contemplate the glorious Works of God, and read his Word, whereby we may attain to the Knowledge of God in Christ, and Fellowship with him: For which end all these Lights, whether of our Eyes, our Reason, the external Lights of Heaven, or whatsoever may be set forth by these Names, are given to us: For this is a part of the description of that Opportunity to be made use

use of for remembering our Creator, *While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not darkened.*

3. We should use our Mercies and Priviledges which are common to us with other Men, to wit, our bodily Sight, our Reason, and all other Comforts, which may be signified by the Lights here mentioned, so as we may be still mindful of the decay and failing of them at Death, and often think with our selves what a Comfort it will be to see by Faith Him that is invifible, favourable to us, to behold Christ the Son of Righteousness, fhining in Mercy upon us, and to have the Day-star, His Spirit, arifing in our Hearts never to fet again, even when all other Lights and outward Comforts will be darkened; the enfuring whereof to our selves, fhould according to *Solomon's* Scope here, be our great ftudy, *While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not darkened.*

4. Although no Man can promife to himfelf fair Weather in this World, but ought to refolve for one Shower of Affliction after another; yet the Lord is pleafed to give unto Men, now and then, breathing times from outward Troubles; and fome Seasons wherein there is a clear Sun-fhine after Rain, and no prefent appearance of Trouble, that they may with the greater Tranquility of Spirit, prepare for the fame: For it is here fupposed, that they may have fome times of fair Summer Weather, *While the Clouds return not after the Rain.*

5. Every Man may expect that frequent Troubles fhall afault him, when Old Age comes, and Death draws near, like one Shower Pouring down immediatly after another is over, till he be carried in to Eternity as with a Flood. *Pf. 90. 5.* For it is imported, that it will be thus with him, when Death draws near, while his Cafe, in fome Health, is thus defcribed, *Not the Clouds return after the Rain.*

6. Every Intermiffion of Trouble fhould be improven for making preparation for the laft Storm, by ftoring the Heart

with such Thoughts of God reconciled to us in Christ, as may prove comfortable to us when Death comes. For this is a part of the description of the Opportunity to be made use of for that end, *While the Clouds return not after the Rain.*

Nex. 3. In the day when the Keepers of the House shall tremble, and the strong Men shall bow themselves, and the Grinders cease, because they are few, and those that look out as the Windows be darkened.

THE Preacher comes now positively to describe the time of the dissolution of this Tabernacle, as not so convenient an opportunity, as the time of Youth and Health, for making Peace with God: And for this end he illustrates the Case of a Man assaulted by Death, by the Similitude of a besieged House or Castle, whose Guards and Watches become feeble, and desert their Duty.

As for the *Keepers of the House*, and the *strong Men*, however many parts of a Man may be understood by these, whether the outward Senses, or the inward Faculties, because they all look to the safety of the whole Body; yet it seems most proper to take the *Keepers* for the Arms and Hands, because they are most active to keep the rest of the Body from hazard, and it is known that Palsies and Shakings agree best to them, and by the *strong Men* to understand the Thighs and Legs, because the Scripture attributes Feebleness, or bowing to these, *Isa. 35. 3.* By the *Grinders* are meant the Teeth, which prepare and make small the Food for the Stomach, these cease from this Duty, being *few* and unfit for it in Old Age: And by these that *look out at the Windows*, are to be understood the Eyes, which stand in their Holes, as Watches in their Towers, to spy Hazards and Advantages, which may befall the Body, the *Darkening* here spoken of makes it clear that he speaks of the Eyes, and not of the other Senses, though by

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consequence the decay of these bring along with it a decay of Sight also.

Hence Learn 1. Mans Body is of a wonderful Constitution, and very curiously framed, like some stately Edifice, or Garrison, having the Arms and Hands as *Keepers*, which can move towards all the Airths for defending of it, the Legs as *strong Men* to carry it out of one Countrey to another, to escape hazard, which no Cattle hath: The Teeth for *Grinders*, to prepare the Food for it: And the Eyes as *Watches* to espy Hazards that they may be prevented: This House should be kept out for Christ's use, the Temple of whose Spirit it is, and not rendered up to be a Habitation for Satan, and these Armies of unclean Lusts which are Souldiers under him: All the Members should be made use of as Weapons of Righteousness to keep it out against Temptations, as well as against outward Hazards: For so doth the wise Man here set out this humane Body under the Similitude of a stately House, or fortified Castle, while he saith, *The Keepers of the House shall tremble, and the strong Men shall bow, &c.*

2. Death, the King of Terrours, will give such a sore Assault to this House of the Body: that let Men defend and supply it as they will, it must be at last surrendered to Worms and Corruption to dwell in, they are happy who timously make sure a House not made with Hands for their better part: For they shall get this House again in a more glorious and durable condition. For it is here clearly held forth, that when Death approaches, all the Officers and Servants of this great House shall be put from their Imployments, *In the day when the Keepers of the House shall tremble, and the strong Men shall bow themselves.*

3. Men that are now acting Wickedness with both their Hands greedily, making them Weapons of Unrighteousness, whether to serve their own Lusts in Gluttony, Drunkenness, and other carnal ways, or to wrong others by Oppression,

shedding of Innocent Blood, and the like, in which the hands are mainly Instrumental, ought to be put in mind of this, that there is a day certainly abiding them, and swiftly coming upon them, wherein these hands shall not be able to act after that manner, nay, not so much as to hold a Drink to their own Head, for Trembling, that by these and the like, considerations they may be moved to make better use of them, to stretch them often out in Works of Charity, to lift them often up in Prayer and Praise, and imploy them in such other lawful Exercises as may be comfortable to them in Death. For every Branch of this description of the Decay of Mens Bodies ought to be improv'd for pressing the main use of preparation for Death, and hath its own peculiar influence for that end, so might Men have Peace and Comfort, *In the day when the keepers of the house shall Tremble.*

4. While Men are able to stand, or walk, it concerns them to look how they use their Legs, that they be not Proud of their Strength while they have it, that they imploy it not in walking after their Lusts, but in running the way of Gods Commands. And that they often bow their strong Men to God in Prayer for strength to other Duties; so may they make sure to themselves that they shall have below them, the everlasting Arms of him whose Legs are as Pillars of Marble, and his Rod and Staff to support them *in the Day that the strong Men bow themselves.* For, this part of the description, to wit, the decay of the Strength of the Legs requires some suitable preparation for it.

5. As the Wisdom and goodness of God should be much acknowledged in giving Men such durable and fit instruments, as their Teeth for grinding and preparing their Food, and these same not be used in making Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof, but in Eating for Strength so, *as the Giver of them;* so while Men have the use of these, they should look upon them as *lasting,* and consider that as they brought them

them not with them into the World; so it is likely they should carry few of them hence, if so be they live to Old Age: And while these Grinders are able to Exerce their office, Men should be careful to feed upon Jesus Christ the Bread of Life, which their ordinary Food should represent and mind them of: For, this will be the true preparation for this Day, *When the Grinders cease because they are few.*

6. As Mens Bodily Eyes are to be highly pryed, and Holily used, in Reading the Word, and beholding the Works of God, for bringing in to their Souls matter of His Praise; and not to be made Emissaries for bringing in Temptations, and fewel to Mens Lusts, *1 Pet. 2. 14.* So while we enjoy them we should often remember the time when we shall be deprived of them, and by the thoughts thereof be moved to use them well, considering that the abuse of them will make the want of them very grievous: For the Preacher doth here mind Men of the *Darkening* of them, as a motive to prepare for Death, by the right use of them, and to study to get the second sight which is Faith, beholding him that is invisible reconciled thorough Christ, so shall there be true Comfort, *In the Day when those that look out at the Windows shall be darkned.*

Ver. 4. *And the door shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the Bird, and all the Daughters of Musick shall be brought low.*

HE goes on to describe farther the dissolution of the Earthly House of our Tabernacle in several particulars, whereof four are in this verse.

The First is, *The Shutting of the Doors in the Streets* in which words there seems to be a Metaphore taken from the Custome of these Houses where sick persons are, they keep the Doors which open toward the Streets, close, that the Sick be not disturbed

sturbed by any going out or coming in: And it may signify this much in general, that while Death is drawing near, correspondence between the dying Man and the World is now given up, as Men shut their Doors at night when they are making toward their rest, and so the words have a truth literally in regard that visits become ordinarily a burden to Dying Men. The Doors also may be taken Metaphorically for these Organs or Instruments of the Body, such as the Mouth, Lips, Throat and the like, whereby Speech is conveyed to others, and Meat passeth down to the Stomach: These Doors are shut, when the Dying Man becomes unable to put forth Speech, or to make use of Meat and Drink.

As for the next expression *when the sound of the Grinding is low*: There is in it also a Metaphore taken from the decay of the sound of Mills, when the Water fails; and it is most clear to understand this as holding forth the consequent of the *ceasing of the Grinders* spoken of in the former verse, because the Teeth are few, they make no such sound in breaking the Food, as they were wont to do when the Man had Health and Strength: And this, according to the construction of the words in our translation, hath connexion with the former as the cause of it, the Doors formerly explained are *shut*, where there is no power in the Teeth to prepare Food for the Stomach.

By the third expression, *he shall rise up at the voice of the Bird*, is not meant that the Dying Man shall be able at all to rise, but that his Weakness is such thorow the coldness and emptiness of his Stomach, and the dryness of his Brain, that he shall get no sound Sleep at all, but the least noise, suppose it were of some little Bird, shall put him off his Rest.

And by the fourth, *the Daughters of Musick shall be brought low*, is meant, that all the Organs or Instruments of the voice and hearing, whereby Men did either make Melody or pleasant Speech, to others, or did delight in such made by others, shall be then so weakned, that they shall neither hear others, nor be heard by them,

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Hence Learn. 1. While Men are able to keep up Society with others, to go out of Doors to them, or admit them into their Houses, and to speak to, and hear one another, they should labour to improve that correspondence for the advantage of their own and others Souls, to Edify, and be Edified by one another, remembering that the Day is coming, when they will love to have the Doors of their House that look to the Streets shut, lest their sinful Companions may come in to vex them, & though they were with them, they will not be able to open the Doors of their Lips, to correspond any more with them; how comfortable will it then be to have Christ dwelling in the Heart by Faith, and to be keeping up correspondence with him by Prayer and Praise, which is the true preparation for this case, *when the Doors shall be shut in the Streets.*

2. It will be a great Affliction to men when they shall find themselves to stand in need of Creature-Comforts, and have the same beside them, and yet have no power to use them: And therefore while they have as much Strength, as to break their own Bread, they should eat in Sobriety, and with thankfulness imploy the Strength they receive by their Food, in Gods service: So shall they prepare for, and have comfort in this time, *when the sound of the grinding shall be low.*

3. As sound Sleep without such distemper of Body, or horror of Conscience as marres the same is a great Mercy, which the Lord bestows upon his own, whensoever he sees it good for them *Psal. 117. 2. and 84. 11.* So while Men Injoy it, they should use it soberly, and imploy all the refreshment they get by it in the service of the Giver, labouring so to walk in the Day-time that their Sleep may be Sanctified, their Reins may teach them in the night season, they may rise early for Holy Exercises, that whensoever they awake they may be still with God; and if at any time Sleep depart from them, they may then think upon and prepare for the case they shall be in, when Death draws near: For he speaks of this as a part of the Affliction.

Affliction of Dying Men, and minds Men in Health of it, that they may thus prepare for it, *when they shall rise up at the voice of the Bird.*

4. As Mans Tongue is given him for Glorifying his Maker, his voice and all the Organs of it for chearing his own and others Hearts in his Praises, his ears to take in the joyful sound of the Gospel, for refreshing of his Heart; So while he hath the use of these Instruments, his *Tongue* and *Ears* he should be careful so to imploy them, he should often let the Lord hear his voice in Prayer and Praise, seing the same is pleasant to him *Cant. 2. 14.* He should be much in edifying discourses with others, which are also sweet to the Lord *Mal. 3. 16.* And nothing taken up with Carnal Mirth, or musick, that so when he shall not be able to speak to, or hear others, he may be making Melody to the Lord in his heart, and may hear his Spirit speaking peace there; For this is the true preparation (comprehended under that direction *Ver. 1*) for such a case as this, *when all the Daughters of Musick shall be brought low.*

Ver. 5. Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the Almond Tree shall flourish, and the Grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the Mourners go about the Streets.

HERE is a farther description of the case that Men shall be in when Death is drawing near unto them, held forth in several expressions. The first two *they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way,* are to the same purpose, and do both signify the want of Strength and courage, and the fearful apprehensions incident to Dying Men, particularly by *that which is high* may be meant any step of their way which is higher than another, and the least stumbling Block in their way, which is to a crazy decayed Man such as *Solomon* here de-

describes, is matter of fear least it make him fall, considering how hurtful a fall may prove to him, and how hardly he would be set to his Feet again; And so the words suppose the Dying Man yet able to step up and down, as some will be till very near the time of their Removal: Or by *that which is high, and the fears in the way*, may be meant the least Trouble, were it but the weight of a hand above the Dying Person, or any action about them which is to them terrible, and makes them fear least it increase their pain.

Next by *the flourishing of the Almond Tree* may be meant the hastening of the persons Death, so the allegory or similitude is used Jer. 1. 11. because that Tree flourishes near the end of Winter, and consequently it may signify also the Decay of their Strength, whereof Gray Hairs, which resemble in colour the Flourishes of the Almond Tree, are a Sign: As on the contrary this same Heavenly Writter doth set forth the vigour and Strength of Youth in a spiritual sense, by the *Temples* (where Gray Hairs first appear) compared to a piece of *Pomegranat* which is Redd and white Cant. 6. 7. Or the similitude may have this sense (which is to the same purpose) that the Blood being now retired toward the Heart of the Dying Man, the pale white Clay appears like the Flourishes of the Almond Tree.

The fourth Expression, *the Grasshopper shall be a Burden*, Signifies also the great Decay of Strength, in so much that the lightest thing were it but a Gnat, or Grasshopper lighting upon the Face of the Dying Man, shall be a burden to him, and yet he shall not be able to put it away.

The fifth is in more plain and proper Terms, that *Desire*, to wit, after all Earthly Objects, whether Lawful, such as Meat, Drink, Marriage, Delight, and the like, or Unlawful, such as Revengeful, Ambitious, Lustful desires, Reckoned out 1 Job. 2. 16. shall now cool and be quite extinguished.

To all which he subjoins a Reason, *because Man goes to his long Home,*

Home, or as the Original is, *to the house of Eternity* or Ages, whereby is meant that estate, wherein the Soul must be Eternally, without any farther change.

And for the last Expression *the Mourners going about the Streets*, the meaning of it is, that the Man being now given over as Dead, the persons made use of in these times to Solemnize the Funerals, were already convening and waiting on; Or the Dying Mans Friends are now going out from him, and already beginning their Mourning for his Death: It is Wisdom before this time come to make sure work of Reconciliation with God in Christ, and to provide some sutable consolation for the Spirit, while the Body shall be in this Condition.

Hence Learn. 1. So long as Men have that much Natural Strength and Courage, as to walk up and down without fear of the ordinary Impediments, and stumbling Blocks that ly in their way, it concerns them to imploy their Strength well, to walk in fear of offending the Lord all the day long *Prov. 23, 17.* to make sure their peace with him, who is most high, that he may not be a Terror to them in the day of Evil *Jer. 17, 17.* to have their Faith of an interest in God so well fixed, that they may not fear to walk thorow the valley of the shadow of Death *Psal. 23, 4.* to lay up in time some sutable consolation against the continuance and Extremity of Temporal Trouble, the Terror and Pain of Death, and every other thing that may be fearful to them in their way to Eternity: And to have so much use of Sanctified Reason, and Faith, as may discover every thing that may present it self as terrible to the natural Man, to be no cause of fear banishing Faith: For, this is true preparation for the case here described, *when man shall be afraid of that which is high, and Feels shall be in the way.*

2. As Men should always look upon Death as hastening toward them, and so learn to Die daily. *1 Cor. 15, 31.* so especially when signs of the Decay of their natural Strength appear upon them, they should then esteem themselves near the end of the

the Winter of this Life; and labour to have Grace so Lively that in regard of the Exercise of it, they may Flourish even in Old Age *Ps. 92. 12.* And study to have their Hoary Head found in the way of Righteousness a Crown of Glory to them *Prov. 16. 31.* And while they are Young and Strong, not to Glory in such Excrementitious things as their Hair, which will shortly be like the *Almond Tree*; so shall they prepare for this state set forth under this similitude; *and the Almond Tree shall Flourish.*

3. Men that have most Strength of Body should look upon the same as a very fading thing, and so not to be trusted in or imployed in serving their Lusts *1st. 5. 22.* but in bearing Christs Yoke, whether of Duties *Mat. 11. 29.* or Crosses *Lam. 3. 27.* so may they have true Comfort: And may cast their burden upon the Lord with confidence that he shall sustain them, when this shall be their case which this Allegorick expression holds out, *and the Grasshopper shall be a Burden.*

4. God will once before men go off this World, cut off all their Desires from Earthly Objects that Wicked men finding themselves to abhor these Sinful Delights which once they did so ardently desire, may be the more convinced of their Folly and Madness, and that the Godly finding their lawful Earthly Delights loathsome to them, may Rejoice that Delights of a better nature are abiding them; the consideration whereof should move all to mortify their sinful, and moderat their lawful desires after things Earthly, and to have their Hearts filled with Heavenly Desires which shall be satisfied, and yet shall never fail, *Philp. 1. 23.* For this is the best preparation for this Condition, *Desires shall fail.*

5. When Ministers make use of Allegories to Illustrat the Truth, they ought to join therewith such plain expressions of the meaning of them, as may clear the Scope they aim at, least continued Allegories breed Vanity and Wantonness of the wit, divert the mind from delighting in the simplicity of the Truth, and form in the Heart misapprehensions thereof:

Therefore doth *Solomon* in the midst of these Allegories insert some plain and proper expressions, such as this is, *Desire shall fail.*

6. Though the Men of this World whose best portion is in this present life, promise to themselves a perpetuity of injoying things Earthly *P/ 49. 12. 2 Pet. 3. 4* yet they shall find them selves within a little miserably disappointed; they shall find that this is not their Home, it were Wisdom to look upon their Mansions here, as short *Hornes* to them, and upon themselves as Strangers and Pilgrims, that so they might give all diligence to ensure to themselves Everlasting Habitations: For when Death comes, *Man goes to his long Home.*

7. After Death there is no change of the state of Souls as to their Misery or Felicity; they must for ever remain either with Satan in his prison, or with Christ in his Fathers house, where there are many Mansions, and consequently there can be no such place as the Purgatory which the Romanists Dream of: For thus doth *Solomon* describe the state of Man after Death, *he goeth to his long Home, or to his House of Eternity or Ages.*

8. While Men have comfortable Society with their Friends God would have them thinking upon the day when they must leave them Mourning behind them, that by the consideration hereof, they may be stirred up to make Conscience of duty to them, that so they may not part with them with a Conscience accusing them for neglect hereof, and that their Friends los by their Removal may be compensated by the biding fruit of their pains toward them, and they may have no ground to Mourn for them, as those *that have no hope*, so shall the Dying Man have Comfort within, *When the Mourners goe about the Streets.*

Ver. 6. *Or ever the Silver Cord be loosed, or the Golden Bowl be broken, or the Pitcher be broken at the Fountain, or the Wheel broken at the Cistern.*

Although this Verse may be understood literally, and in that sense may be usefully applyed to the Scope, that
Men

Men should Remember their Creator, which is to make sure work of their Peace with him, before they be deprived of all their outward Ornaments, and necessary Commodities of this Life; or the Instruments of their Imployment, whatsoever it be; yet it seems most futable to the strain of the Preacher in the former purpose, to look upon the Words, as containing so many sweet Allegories or Similitudes, to set forth the decay or dissolution of the most noble parts of this earthly Tabernacle.

The Similitudes are borrowed from a *Fountain* or *Well*, about which is built some curious Engine for drawing up the Water, with a silver Cord or Chain, to let down a golden Bowl or Pitcher, or some such Vessel to lift up the Water; which Similitude doth fitly point out the humane Body, which hath a Fountain of natural Life, and Spirits within it, and so many excellent Instruments to convoy and impart the same to the several parts of the Body, all which at Death will be loosed and broken to peices. And though this general Sense might be satisfactory and useful as to the Scope, which is to stir up Men to Remember their Creator, before these noble Parts be decayed, and it may be thought safe to enquire no farther anent the Particulars intended by every part of the Similitude, considering that it seems now to be very uncertain by what Names these noble Parts of the Body, the Heart, Brain, Liver, and the like, were called and distinguished one from another, among the Hebrews in *Solomon's* time, and by what Similitudes they were set out, which make great diversity among Interpreters, in expounding and applying of them: And considering also that there are several of these Parts, which may be represented by diverse parts of this Similitude; yet we shall mention what is most universally agreed upon, to be pointed at by the particulars of the Allegory here made use of.

And *First*, By the *silver Cord* is meant, the Marrow of the Back-bone, compared to a silver Cord, because much of the strength

strength of the Body lyeth in it, in so much as without it Men would creep upon the Earth as Worms do, and because in colour it resembles a *silver Cord*, the *loosing* of it is the weakening of it, when the Spirits withdraw from it, it becomes cold, and loses the force of it. The Similitude may also signify some of the prime Arteries, or Strings of the Heart, which thence convey the Vital Spirits to the Liver, and other parts of the Body.

Secondly, The golden Bowl, is taken from that yellow thin Skin containing the Brain within the Skull, which is broken when the Pores of it are much opened to let in the Air, as falls out near the time of Death.

Thirdly, The Pitcher at the Fountain, is thought to point out a great hollow Vein, somewhat in form or figure like a *Pitcher*, which doth receive from the Liver, here called the *Cistren*, Nutriment, now turned by the Liver into Blood, to be conveyed to the rest of the Members, and this is *broken* when it is obstructed, or the operation and office of it impeded, near the time of Death.

Fourthly, By the Wheel at the Cistren, are meant the Lungs, the prime Instruments of the Breath and Voice, which are set out by this Similitude, because, like the Wheel of a Fountain, they are still in motion, drawing down, and sending up the Breath again, as the Wheel is still sending down, or drawing up the Bucket: This *Wheel is broken at the Cistren*, when thorough the abundance of watry Humours or Phlegm, filling the Stomach, they cease from their motion and operation, and so brings Death.

Now the first Words of the Chapter are to be knit with this, as with all the former to this purpose, *Remember thy Creator before this Case come*, and timously make Peace with Him, that thou mayest have peace in this day.

Doct. 1. Men should not despise humane Learning, and the knowledge or science of natural Things, were it for no more

more but to help them to understand the Fabrick of their own Bodies: And although every Man's Gift is not to be laid aside as to the publick imploying thereof, because he wants such and such a measure of humane Learning, seeing the Lord hath made eminent use of some who wanted it, *Act. 4. 13.* as he hath done also of others, who have been eminently endued therewith, *Act. 7. 22. and 22. 3.* yet every Mans short-sightedness therein should humble him, and move him to bestow some of his time for attaining to it, especially considering that Mans Body is so wonderful a peice of Artifice, that without the help of these Sciences which describe the same, hardly can such Scriptures as this be made clear. *Ere the silver Cord be loosed. &c.*

2. The Lord hath wisely ordered that Death should assault, and take down this Tabernacle of our Body by degrees; and loose at leasure the several Pinns thereof, first weakening the out-works, and then setting upon the inward, that every Stroak and Assault may be a Warning for a farther, and that when Men find their Hands trembling, or their Legs enfeebled, their Eyes dim, or their Ears dull of Hearing, they may prepare for an Assault upon the Heart and other noble Parts: For after *Solomon* hath described the dissolution of several other parts of the Body, he comes here to the inmost and most noble parts thereof, that Men may be stirred up to Remember their Creator at least *Ere the silver Cord be loosed, or the golden Bowl be broken.*

3. All the Organs of the Body, especially the more noble parts thereof are very excellent pieces of Work, and to be so esteemed of, not so much for the substance of them, as for the Divine Art which is manifested in the framing of them; and the excellent uses they serve for: And therefore both these, and the Powers and Faculties of the Soul, which reside in, and act by these, are to be used holily. Mans strength here mainly held out by *the silver Cord* should be esteemed more precious than

than to be spent upon his Lusts, he should beware of filling this *golden Bowl*, his Brain, wherein these excellent Faculties, his Imagination and Memory have their prime Residence, with unclean, ambitious, revengeful Speculations, and such like Immoralities, and by Intemperance and Excess to spoil this *Pitcher*, corrupt this *Cistren*, and break this *Wheel*, his Liver, Lungs and other parts, which may be signified by these Similitudes, and so do what he can to be his own Destroyer: Therefore are these parts of the Body set out here by such elegant Metaphors or Similitudes borrowed from very precious things, *The silver Cord, the golden Bowl, &c.*

4. These parts of the Body which are most excellent and durable, are to be looked upon as very brittle, and fading, and therefore a House not made with Hands to be ensured, and this frail Body only so far respected and cared for, as it may be the more instrumental in doing the Lord Service while we have it: Therefore are the most noble Parts of the Body here represented by *A golden Bowl, a Pitcher and a Wheel.*

5. While Men have some measure of Health and Strength, they should consider that it will be no fit time for making their Peace and Acquaintance with God in Christ, when Death shall be loosing the last Pinns of their Tabernacle, these Powers and Faculties of the Soul, which are mainly active in Knowing, Believing, Loving, and Praising the Lord, being then a decaying: And therefore they should think it their true Wisdom timely to remember their Creator in the days of their Youth and strength, ere the silver Cord be loosed, &c. or the Wheel broken at the Cistren.

Ver. 7. *Then shall the Dust return to the Earth, as it was: and the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*

Solomon having at length described the Dissolution of the earthly House of our Tabernacle after Death: He giveth here

here a summ of Mans future State after Death, in reference to the two principal parts whereof he is made up.

And *First*. For his Body, which he calls *Dust*, because it was Formed out of the Dust, *Gen. 2. 7.* and being separat from the Soul, is the most vile and loathsome piece of Dust of any other; he saith it *returns* to the Dust, because it is ordinarily laid there, to remain till the Resurrection, and because it is in effect the same substance with it.

And *Next*, For his more noble Part, his *Soul*, called here the *Spirit*, because of the immaterial substance thereof, and its Resemblance to God the Father of Spirits, *it returns to him who gave it*; There is no Ground to think he speaks only of the Souls of the Godly, but rather of the common state of the Spirits of all Men after Death, neither is there any necessity to think that therefore every Soul must go to Heaven, seeing the Scripture is so clear to the contrary: But every Soul is said to *return to God*, because in the very moment of its separation from the Body, it must sit it self before him the Supreme Judge, to be eternally disposed of, according to his pleasure who will sentence it according to the state it shall be found in at Death: And these considerations also have great influence in exciting Men timously to make their peace with God; that he may favourable entertain their Spirits at Death, and they may lay down their Bodies in the dust in hope of a Glorious Resurrection: And this is the reference which this verse hath to the Scope exprest in the first words of the Chapter.

Hence Learn. 1. Although our Bodies have some Beauty and Majesty imprinted on them, while the Soul resides in them, and they are acted by it, for which cause they were set out by these excellent similitudes formerly mentioned, yet of themselves they are but *Dust*, and will appear when the Soul is separat from them to be very loathsome Clay, the thought whereof should keep Men from being Proud of their Bodily Strength,

or Beauty *Jer. 9. 23.* it should make them admire the Lords condescending to have correspondence with such Dust *Gen. 18. 27.* his Marvelous Art and Power in framing so Beautiful a piece of Work as our Bodies, of the Dust, *Pf. 139. 14.* especially his assuming so frail a Being as a human Body in a personal union with the Deity *Pf. 8. 4. &c.* It should be made use of as a ground of Confidence to obtain pity and help from him to frail Dust *Pf. 103. 14.* And of submission to hardest Dispensations *Isai. 45. 9.* it should make us careful to get the Ornament of his Grace, which makes base Dust truly Beautiful *1 Pet. 3. 4.* It should banish the fear of all flesh which is but Dust like ourselves, *Isai. 51. 7. 8.* and shoul make us long for the time wherein Christ shall change our vile Bodies, and make them like his Glorious Body *Philip. 3. 21.* all which are the uses the Scripture makes of this consideration, that we are Dust, *the Dust. &c.*

2. The Bodies of Men at Death go not as their Spirits to that state wherein they must be Eternally, but as they were at first taken out of the Earth, so they must go thither for a time, the Lord hath so ordered, that whereby he may prove and Exercise his peoples Faith concerning the Resurrection: For, saith he, *The dust shall return to the Earth as it was.*

3. The Souls of Men die not, nor go to Corruption, as their Bodies do, but subsist after their separation from the Body, which should make Men careful to see to the Eternal well-being of them, for *Salomon* here, supposing the body, or Dust, to be gone to the Earth, he speaks of the Soul, or Spirit, as now subsisting, whereby it appears that the immortality of the Soul hath been Preached to the ancient Churches, *The Spirit returns to God who gave it.*

4. Men receive not their Souls from their Parents as they do their Bodies, nor are they formed of any preexistent matter, as the Spirits are which Beasts have *Gen. 1. 20.* but are Created of nothing, and immediatly infused into the Body by the

the Lord: For, saith the Preacher, *the Spirit shall return to God who gave it.*

5. Our Spirits are Gods free gift, and therefore all the powers and faculties thereof, ought to be imployed to the Honour of the Giver *Rom. 11. 26.* He is to be depended on and acknowledged for the preservation of them. *Job. 10. 12.* And all Crosses upon Body or Spirit to be submitted unto *Heb. 12. 9.* For saith he, *The Spirit returns to God who gave it.*

6. As the Spirits of Men even the greatest on Earth are in Gods hand to be moved by him, while they are in the Body as he pleases *Prov. 21. 1.* So when they go out of the Body they must list themselves before him to be disposed of at his pleasure, who will throw the Spirits of the Wicked into the Lake that flames with Fire and Brimstone, and will bind up the Spirits of the Godly as his *Jewels* in the bundle of Life, for in reference to both, this is verified, *The Spirit shall return to God who gave it.*

Ver. 8. *Vanity of Vanities (saith the Preacher) all is Vanty.*

IN this and the following Verses is contained the last part of the Chapter, and the close of the whole Book, wherein the Preacher doth briefly Summ up, and by several Arguments commend the purpose contained in it, which for Methods cause we may take up in four Articles or Heads of Doctrine.

The first which is in this Verse, contains the Summ of the first Principal part of the Book, namely, that all Created things, and human endeavours about them, are vain or insufficient for leading a Man to his true Happinels: And this having been frequently held out before, is here necessarily Repeated that all may assent unto it, as a Truth now abundantly proven, and which the Preacher himself loved to meditate upon and writ, again and again; and with this Repeating of it, he mentions his calling to be a *Preacher*, as that which should gain weight to every Truth delivered by him, and to this in particular.

Beside what hath been observed from this purpose before, We may Learn. 1. Necessary Truths must not be cast by after they are clear to us, and sufficiently proven to be Truths by many Arguments, neither will they become loathsome to a Holy Mind, but ought to be intertained and meditate upon till we find motions lutable thereunto, wakened in our Hearts, and some Fruits in our practice answerable to them, which may evidence we do truly know and believe them, and the more clear such Truths are to a Gracious Soul, the sweeter they will grow, and the more delight will the Soul have to dwell upon them; Therefore doth *Solomon*, after he hath fully proven and cleared this Truth, and frequently asserted it, here again represent the same to his own Heart and others, *Vanity of Vanities, &c.*

2. So prone are our Hearts to wander after Earthly Delights as our only Happiness, that even after they have been in some measure divorced from the same, there is great need often to view the Vanity of these things, as we desire to keep our Hearts alienat from them, and in love with that true sweetness which is to be had in Communion with God, while we are in this life, we are (like Children newly weaned) very ready to renew old acquaintance with the Breasts. Therefore doth *Solomon* after frequent Repeating of this Truth along this Treatise of Mortification, Repeat it here again in the close of it, that he may keep his Heart alienat from Idols, *Vanity of Vanities, &c.*

3. When Ministers have sufficiently proven, illustrat and made use of the Truth proposed by them to be handled, it is no vain Repetition for them to represent the same Truth in the very Terms in which they did propose it at first, that by the Blessing of God upon their proofs, illustrations and uses of it, it may now at last have more hearty acceptance, and take deeper impression than could be expected at first. For so doth *Solomon* here Repeat the Truth he proposed in the entry of this Book

Book, after he hath cleared, proven and made use of the same, *Vanity of Vanities*.

4. When Men see *Holiness* in the *Beauty* of it, *Sin* in the hazard of it, and *Death* in the certainty and terrour of it, they cannot but see the *Vanity* of *Earthly Delights* considered as the object of Mans Happiness, they cannot but see the emptiness and insufficiency of them in order to that end, seeing they distract the Heart from the Study of *Holiness*, and marre preparation for *Death*, and consequently Men that banish thoughts of *Death*, and neglect the study of *Holiness* cannot but be ravished with *Earthly Delights*, as the only substantial things worthy of their Heart, and to be sought as their chief good, for we may safely conceive *Solomon* here after many sweet Precepts concerning the study of *Holiness*, and lively Representations of *Death* to his own Heart, and others, to have gotten a new sight of the *Vanity* of things *Earthly*, and to invite others to pass sentence thereupon with him *Vanity of Vanities*, &c.

5. A Man that hath a call to Preach the Truth of God, should esteem more of it, than of the most Honourable outward Relation or Title he can have beside, he should carry the thoughts of Gods calling and entrusting of him, along in his Heart, to make him confident of Furniture even to the end of his Employment, and people also should frequently remember the calling of sent Ministers, that the Truths delivered may have the greater weight as coming to them from Gods Commissionat Officers. For, as *Solomon* took this for his first stile in the beginning of his Book, even while he was Reckoning out some others, so he mentions it alone in the close as his main encouragement, and that which should mainly gain respect to his Message, *Vanity of Vanities* saith the Preacher.

6. When we have gone thorow many particular instances of these *Earthly Delights* wherein Men place their Happiness, and have attained to convincing proofs of the *Vanity*, and insufficiency

sufficiency of them for that end, we ought then to raise our Hearts to an assent to the truth of the general, that all of that sort are Vanity, and not leave room still to Satan, to keep our perverse Hearts in suspense and expectation that there may be some Earthly Delight which we have not yet seen, more worthy than the rest, and so keep us off all our time from seeking Happiness in that wherein it can only be found: For after Solomon hath comforted many particular instances of these things wherein Men ordinarily seek their Happiness, he now asserts the general, and holds out to all for their assent unto it, *all is Vanity.*

Vt. 9. And moreover because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the People knowledge, yea he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many Proverbs.

THE second article or Conclusion of this Book contains a Commendation of the purpose contained in it, and this hath three Branches: The first is from the Preacher himself, whose qualifications and pains are set forth in several particulars in this Verse. 1. He had a good stock of *Wisdom* both immediately infused. *1 King. 4. 29.* and by his extraordinary pains acquired *Eccles. 1. 13.* 2. He did improve the same well for the Instruction of the Church in all ages, especially these under his charge; here called *the People.* 3. He was very assiduous and constant in this Work; *he still taught,* either by frequent Preaching, and Exhortation, as a publick Officer of the Church (such as he was) should do, *2 Tim. 4. 2.* Or by putting other Ministers to their duty, and encouraging them in it, as a Religious King like him, should do *2 Cor. 7: 8. 9.* Or by writing Scripture as an extraordinary Prophet, in which respect (being Dead) he yet speaketh, *and still teacheth the People Knowledge.* 4. He rested not upon any measure he had received; *but gave good heed,* or as the word in the original is, *he weighed*

Weighed every thing in the Ballance, and sought out, carefully more and more of the Knowledge of God, and of Mans duty, that he might edify the Church. 5. He did *wisely order*, and digest the purpose he delivered. 6. He condescended upon variety of matter suitable to many cases of the People. And 7. He contrived the same in such short and grave Sentences, here called *Proverbs*, as are apt to gain esteem, and have prevalence in the minds of Men, as the word rendered *Proverbs* signifies *beset in order many Proverbs*.

Hence Learn. 1. Though the worth or qualifications of Instruments can add nothing to the Authority of the truth of God, which is of it self worthy of all *Acceptation*, who ever carry it, yet so ready are people to lay hold upon every thing that may but seem to be a ground of casting at Truth, that the Vessels that carry it, had need not only to be without spot and blemish, but also adorned with such accomplishments as may make them lovely to people, that so there may be no ground from them to cast at their Message. For here the Spirit of God finds it necessary to commend the Vessel that carried the Treasure in this Book to the Church, thereby to gain the more acceptance to it, *And moreover because the Preacher was wise, he still sought, &c.*

2. As every Christian is bound humbly to avow the Graces and Gifts of God bestowed upon him, when the Glory of God, and the encouragement and edification of others require the same, so it is especially suitable for Ministers, when their Intention is Honest and sincere, namely to make Truth, not themselves only, in esteem. As they should be ready to declare themselves sensible of, and humble for their failings, when the same may Glorify God or edify others, so should they also be, to avow what Graces God hath given them, especially their qualifications for their calling, when the Lord hath born Testimony to the same by his Blessing upon their Labours; they must not so fear the suspicion of self-seeking, as always to

conceal the Lords liberality toward them; but whensoever it may serve to make way for his Truth, they ought humbly to declare the same, as here this exemplary Preacher doth. *And moreover because the Preacher was wise, he still taught &c.*

3. The greater measure of gifts especially of Knowledge and understanding of the matters of God, any Man have attained to, the more careful should he be to communicat the same for the good of others in his place and station, this being the end for which they are given. 1 Cor. 12. 7. And the same being rewarded as if it were gain and advantage to God, Mat. 25. 21. As likewise the Communication of our gifts being the way to make them grow Prov. 11. 25. For, Solomon did therefore teach the people Knowledge *because he was wise,* and the words may be rendered *the greater abundance of Wisdom he had, the more he taught the People Knowledge.*

4. Albeit Christs Ministers cannot be alwise about the actual discharge of the duties of their Calling, yet ought they to be very assiduous and frequent therein, and in some sense still about their work, gathering variety of matter fit to be Communicat to the people Mat. 13. 52. keeping their Hearts always in a right frame for the delivery of it, Prov. 16. 23. And watching all opportunities for Communicating the same. 2 Tim. 4. 2. And when they have not Ability or opportunity to teach, their practice and carriage must *still teach the people Knowledge* 1 Tim. 4. 12. For, so doth Solomon here set forth himself at the direction of the Spirit of God, as an example to all Preachers, because the Preacher was wise *he still taught the People Knowledge.*

5. They that are most able to teach others, should still be Scholars themselves, not only diligent Hearers of other Preachers, that they may learn more, but accurate Searchers for all means and opportunities of profiting in Knowledge, there being still more Knowledge to be had Philip. 3. 13. and success promised to the sincere Seeker Hos. 6: 3. For, though Solomon

was

was Wise, and able to teach the People Knowledge, yet he was not so satisfied with his measure as to become Lazy, or give over farther pains for more, *yea he gave good heed, and sought out, &c.*

6. We should neither rashly receive, nor vent any thing for Truth, till first we have weighed and pondered the same, in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, by the exercise of sanctified Reason, comparing the same with the Scripture, considering what particular Truths are most fitting for the People we have to do with, and what are the fittest Opportunities of delivering the same: For so did Solomon, He gave good heed, the Word signifies to weigh in a Ballance, and he sought out, which signifies very accurately and carefully to search: And both may be referred either to what he himself received from others, or to what he gave out to others.

7. Even these of the Lords Servants who were immediately furnished with Gifts for their Employment, and infallibly assisted in the exercise of them, were not exempted from ordinary pains and diligence, to clear themselves more and more concerning the Truths revealed to them, and to find out the fittest way and season, of delivering these Truths to the People, see 1 Pet. 1. 10. How then should ordinary Ministers of meanner Parts and Gifts stretch their Abilities to the utmost, and improve much of their time in Prayer and Reading, for increase of their Gifts, and fitness for the exercise of them, seeing such a Man as Solomon, was thus exercised? He gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order. &c.

8. There is no form of speech that can be imagined prevalent with Reasonable Creatures, but the Lord hath condescended upon it in his word, where we find Songs, and Lamentations, plain Language, and Parables, large insisting upon one purpose, and Proverbs, which are short Sentences cleared by similitudes, and so apt to prevail, and have Dominion (as

the word *Proverb* signifies) in the minds of Men, *he set in order many Proverbs*, or as *Proverbs* are now collected of many.

9. As the cases of the Lords People are various, Difficulties, Duties, Temptations, and Consolations, Many; so the Lords Word is fitted for them all, it is divided in many parcels, and every one that handles it, should labour to Enrich himself with much of it, that he may bring forth variety of it to People according to their need: For, so did *Solomon*, *he gave good heed and sought out, and set in order many Proverbs*.

10. There is a sweet order and wise disposal of the Truths set down in Scripture, though we seldom see it, by reason of our Darknes, and therefore Christs Ministers should digest and put in order the Truths they deliver to his people: He first *Humbles*, and then *Comforts*, He first gives *Faith* and then *Holiness*, and (which is sutable to the order of Doctrine in this Book) first weans Mens Hearts from Earthly Delights, before they can be set upon Heavenly: For though Men do least apprehend a Method in *Solomons* Writtings of any other in Scripture, yet here the Spirit of God tells us that there is an order in them, *He sought out and set in order many Proverbs*.

Ver. 10: *The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written was upright, even words of Truth.*

THe second Branch of the commendation of the Doctrine is taken from the qualities of it, and these are three: *First*, That what he had studied was *acceptable Words*, or as the original bears, *Words of desire*, that is, purpose worthy of Acceptation, fit to gain the desires and Delights of Men, and to take them wholly up in studying to believe and obey them; and this he sets forth as intended by him in all his great diligence.

Secondly, That what he had *Written was upright*, or as the word signifies, *Approved*, namely of God, or streight and consonant

sonant to his mind, and able to make streight in Heart and practice, all that get Grace to understand and believe it, see *Prov.* 8. 8. And this he sets down as the success of his diligent study mentioned in the former Branch.

Thirdly, That what ever he had affirmed of the vanity of Earthly Delights, and the worth of Holiness in order to a Mans Happiness, was *Truth*, or firm and worthy to be rested on; In summ, the purpose of this Book is fitted powerfully to work upon the affections, being *Acceptable Words*; Wisely to regulat the practice being *Upright* or streight words, and solidly to inform the Judgement, being *Words of Truth*.

Hence Learn 1. Though it be a detestable thing in a Minister to study to please the corrupt and Sinful Humours of Men by concealing necessary Truths, or venting any thing contrary to Truth *Gal.* 1. 10. by extenuating Mens Sins, or speaking Peace, and Comfort to them in their evil ways *Ezek.* 13. 18. yet it is very lawful for him to study such a strain and Method in delivering Truth, and such a timeing thereof, as may be most pleasing to his Hearers for their good to Edification *Rom.* 15. 2. And most powerful with them to disengage them from their Idols, and engage them to Christ; and the study of Holiness: For this was *Solomons* study, worthy to be imitate by all faithful Ministers, *The Preacher sought to find out Acceptable words.*

2. Although the most part of Men loath the truth of God, as if it were unworthy to have their Spirits and time spent upon it, and do delight more in Fables, than in most necessary Truths *2 Tim.* 4. 3, 4. yet is the Truth of it self worthy of all Acceptation, and when the Beaurty and worth of it is seen, in order to the Souls true Peace and Happiness, it cannot but draw the desires and delights of Men, in so far as they are renewed to imbrace and practise it: Therefore is the purpose of this Book here called *Acceptable Words.*

3. They are not rash, Indigested, and extemporary discourses

that usually are Blest to gain acceptance, and to draw the delights and desires of them that are truly Wise, toward them, but rather such as are *Digested*, and accurately sought out by pains in Prayer, Meditation, and other Means appointed of God. It must be Satan who suggests Prejudices to Mens minds against Truth, because it is Studied and Elaborat: For thus *Solomon* commends the purpose of this Book, that *he sought to find out*, (which signifies *great Study*) *acceptable Words*.

4. However many of the Truths of God appear unreasonable to unreasonable Men *Ezek. 18. 25.* such as all Unbelievers are *2 Thes. 3. 2.* yet nothing is held forth in Scripture, nor can be drawn from it by a right consequence, but what is *Upright*, *Streight*, and consonant to the mind of God, the Rule of all Reason and Equity, and which being understood and believed, tends to make Men streight in Heart and practice *Psal. 119. 9.* sincere and without dissimulation toward God and Man, as the word here translated *Upright* signifies, and directeth them in the Streight way to their own Happiness *2 Tim. 3. 17.* For, saith he, *that which was written was Upright.*

5. Nothing but what is Upright, or clearly consonant to the mind of God, should be acceptable to any, so that before Men suffer themselves to be taken with what is held forth as Truth, they should try as the *Noble Bereans* did, whether the same be Upright or not: For having said, *he sought to find out acceptable Words*, and speaking of his success as *sutable* and *satisfactory* to his desires, he saith *that which was written was Upright.*

6. Where God gives a sincere desire to seek out that which may be for his Glory, and the Edification of others, and to give diligence for that effect, he doth also bless the means with some success, though not always in reference to others profiting, yet in reference to the Instruments pains and attaining to the Knowledge of his mind, for though *Solomon* doth not say, that having sought to find out *Acceptable Words*, he did

did find Words that were Acceptable, yet he can say, that which was *Written* was *Upright*; and that was a sufficient reward to him.

7. The word of the Lord will not deceive or disappoint any that receive it, they will find Threatnings to be Truth, and verified upon themselves, who fly not from the Wrath threatned; and whosoever imbrace promises, will find at last the accomplishment of them, and till the word be looked upon as such, it can never be received, nor *Acceptable*, as it ought to be: For this is a part of the Commendation of it, that it was *even words of Truth*.

Ver. 11. *The word of the Wise are as Goats, and as Nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies, which are given from one Shepherd.*

IN the third place he commends the Truth from the efficacy and Authority thereof; and this Branch of the commendation he doth not apply as before to the purpose contained in this Book only, but to the Truth in general, delivered by any whom God sends and qualifies for that end: The expressions seems to be borrowed from Sheep-herds who make use of *Goats* to drive up the dull and sluggish Beasts of their flock, and of *Nails* for *fixing* their folds wherein they assemble their Flocks: and all this they do at the direction of the chief Sheep-herd, or owner of the Flock.

Under which Metaphore is held forth, First, A twofold effect of the Truth of God. 1. That it is quick and powerful to incite Men to their Duty, and shake off their Laziness, which Resembles the use of the *Goat*. 2. That it serves to fix, confirm and establish Men in the ways of the Lord, and so to prevent their inconstancy, resembled by the use of the *Nails*. Next, There is a description of the Dispensers or Preachers of this word, they are called *the Masters of Assemblies*, or *Collections*.

lections as the word is, not as if they had any Magisterial or Lordly Power and Authority over the Lords People assembled, to injoin any thing of their own, but because they preside in publick Worship, and direct the Lords People how to manage it aright.

Thirdly, There is held forth the Authority of the Truth, as being given from Christ, as also the Authority and Subordination of all the Preachers thereof to him, for these words *which are given &c.* may be referred both to the words of the *Wise* which have the forementioned effects, and to the *Masters of Assemblies*, both these being given from One Sheep-herd, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was frequently made known to the Church of old by that stile *Ezek. 34. 23.* and *37. 24.* *Isa. 40. 11.* and who only hath power to make Laws, and appoint Officers in the Church *Isa. 33. 22.*

Hence Learn. 1. These Ministers who do sincerely aim at the edification of the Lords people, and success of his Truth among them, will not only commend the Truth as delivered by themselves, but they will also commend it, as it is delivered by all others who are sent and qualified for that end, it will be their pleasure to see the Truth successful and efficacious in the hands of any faithful Minister, and they ought to express the same to the people, least in commending that Truth only which themselves Preach, they may seem to be seeking their own esteem, and undervaluing others, and so may pre-judge the Truth: Therefore doth Solomon here, no less highly commend the Truth delivered by any that are truly *Wise*, than he did commend it before as delivered by himself in this Book, and others of his Writing, *the words of the Wise are as Goats.*

2. As every Man naturally hath beside his impotency for what is good, much Slowness, Backwardness, and Unwillingness to draw in Christs Yoke, to put forth the power he hath in his duty, and to call for that which God is ready to give him;

him; So the Word of the Lord faithfully Preached, and accompanied with his Blessing, will give Men no ease in their security, and neglect of necessary duties, but will be still *Goading* them thereunto, by serious Exhortations, and Obtestations though they should spurn against their Teachers, by severe Threatnings if they continue Lazy and negligent, it will leave wounds in their Consciences. *Act. 2. 37. It will divide between the Joins and Marrow*, that they may be forced to fly to Christ the good Samaritan, that He may pour Oyl in their Wounds; and by solid refutation of their errours and mistakes, it will cut them sharply *Tu. 1. 13.* For this efficacy of the word faithfully Preached, and accompanied with the powerfull Blessing of the chief *Sheep-herd*, is here set forth under this similitude, *the Words of the Wise, are as Gold.*

3. When People are engaged to Christ, and in some measure established in the Truth, and at their Duty, they are prone to make defection therefrom: And therefore the Word serves to fasten them to Him, to confirm them in the Truth and in their Duty, to unite them among themselves by Love, that they may not be henceforth Children tossed to and fro *with every wind of Doctrine*, distracted from Christ by their Idols, or rent off from another, by Schisms and Divisions: And consequently Christs Ministers should not slightly pass the pressing of their Duty, but by earnest pressing of the Truth, and frequent inculcating of their Duty by Scripture Arguments and Motives, should drive home the same, as a *Nail in a sure place*, that so what they deliver may be as *Nails fastened*.

4. As the Lord hath appointed that there should be Meeting-places for his People to Assemble themselves together in, for upholding his visible Glory before the World, the mutuall upstirring of his people in his service, and that the same Word and Ordinance may do good to many at once, from which Assemblies none of his people ought to withdraw themselves *Heb. 10. 25.* So his pubick Ministers ought to be the principal
Actors

Actors in the Worship performed there, they ought to see that these Assemblies be frequented, that order and decency be kept in them, that the Worship be rightly managed, and all things done in the House of God, according to his own command, in which respects Ministers are here called *the Masters of Assemblies*.

5. Jesus Christ is the only *One* (or chief) *Sheep-herd* of the Flock, who alone hath power to perswade, and lead the same in the paths of Righteousness, by the still running Waters *Psal.* 23. 2. 3. who will deal tenderly with the weak Lambs, and the Sick of the Flock *Isa.* 40. 11. and who only hath laid down his Life, for His Sheep, for He is here called that *One Sheep-herd*.

6. Then only the Truth hath the forementioned effects when Christ is the Dispenser of it, by the Power of His own Spirit conveying it thorow His sent Ministers to His People, and therefore none should take upon them, publicly to deliver the Truth, but they who are given to the Church from Him: Truth should be both delivered and received, as that which is *given from him*, Ministers should beware of delivering any thing but what they are sure they have received from Him, and people should try both whom and what they hear, for both of the persons and of the words which have the forenamed effects, this last Clause may be understood, *which are given from one Sheep-herd*.

V. Cr. 12. And farther by these, my Son, be admonished; of making many Books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the Flesh.

THe third Article of the Conclusion of this Book contains an Exhortation to the right use making of the whole, as sufficient to admonish Men of their Danger and Duty, wherein all other Writings come short; and in pressing this, he doth *First*, Take up every Hearer under that very warm and loving

loving Relation of a Son, that so he may gain the better acceptance to his Message.

Next, He shews the principal use to be made of the things he had Written, and not of these only, but of all the Words of the Wise commended in the former verse, that is of every message of any sent Minister of Christ, to wit, that by these Men should be admonished, the word signifies to be *Inlightened*, that is informed, and consequently (according to the sense of our Translation) made Cautious and wary that they mistake not in so great a matter as this, the discovery of the nearest way to their true Happiness.

Thirdly, He presseth this by two Reasons. The 1. Is in these words, *for in making many Books there is no end*, which cannot be understood of the Writting of many Books like this in hand, to wit Books of Scripture, seeing after Solomons time there behooved to be many Books of this sort made, for so he should seem to have condemned the Writting of more Scripture, and likewise there is an end put to the making of Books of that sort, by closing these Books with a Curse upon any that should add to them *Rev. 22, 18.* but the meaning is, that if Men do not satisfy themselves with that light, and these admonitions which are held out in this Book, and other Scriptures, they will become vain in their Imaginations, and every Man will fancy a new and nearer way to Happiness than another, and out of his boundless desire of vain Glory, will make no end of his Enquiry, but will spend the best of his time and strength to vent his own Notions, and commend his vain Imaginations about the way to true Happiness, and to confute others (as it is clear natural Men of the most refined Wits have done in many written Volumes) and consequently it is clear he doth not condemn the Writting or study of other Books beside the Scripture, providing they be Consonant thereunto, but only of such as oppose the Scripture, in so far as they pretend to point out a way to Happiness contrary to what is held out therein,

by the study whereof Mens Souls can never have true rest nor quietness, till they close with such Truths as are held forth in this Book, *which are as Nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies*, fixing and establishing the Hearts of those that receive them, concerning this main Querie, where their true Happiness is to be had. 2. The second reason is, that *much study is a weariness to the Flesh*, he speaks of every Study opposite to the Study of the Truth formerly commended, and the meaning is, that he who will apply himself to any other Study for attaining to true Happiness, may well weary his Flesh, he shall do no more good to himself, he shall bring no true profit, or satisfaction to his Soul, and therefore it is the part of every Child of Wisdom, to apply himself to the making use of these Truths formerly commended.

Hence Learn. 1. When Ministers have held forth Light, and given warning to People concerning their Duty and Danger, they must be very earnest with them, to admit and make use of the same, and must not think themselves sufficiently exonerated to have held forth Light, and given warning to people, unless they do their outmost to prevail with them to make use thereof. For so doth *Solomon* here, after clear Light held forth concerning Mens Duty, and warning given of their Hazard in case they neglect it, he is most serious with them to make use of his pains, *farther by these, my Son, be admonished, or enlightened.*

2. This is the perfection of Scripture above all other Writings in the World, that every part of it which hath been by any Pen-man delivered to the Church, doth contain a perfect rule of Faith and Manners, so that no other Writings beside, or contrary to it, are necessary for supplying the defects of it. For *Solomon* here supposes that what he and others of the Lords Servants who lived before and in his time had Written (though then there was but a small part of Holy Scripture delivered to the Church) was sufficient to *Admonish* Men of their Duty, and Hazard,

Hazard, in order to their true Happiness, while he saith *by these, my Son, be admonished.*

3. In the Study of the Scripture Men should not aim at their Comfort only, but mainly that they may receive clear Information and warning of their Sin and Hazard, the true remedy thereof, and the way to attain to it: For this is one main use to be made of this Book, and consequently of the rest of Scripture, *by these be Admonished.*

4. Though some of the Hearers of the Gospel be strong Men in comparison of others who are but Babes *1 Job. 2. 13. 14.* yet all of them should come as Children to hear the Lords Mind with meekness and submission to the Reproofs and warnings of the Word, with Love to their Teachers, desiring the *sincere Milk of the Word* from them: And Ministers should put on Bowels of Fatherly affection toward the people with whom they deal: Therefore doth Solomon here, speak to every Hearer as a Son, *by these, my Son, be Admonished.*

5. Men are naturally so transported with a desire of Vain Glory, especially that which they affect to have by their Wisdom *Job. 11. 12.* that while they have time or strength, they will never make an end of seeking out many Inventions, whereby to attain to their imaginary Happiness, after they have Written one Book to shew themselves Wise in the discovery of the way to Happiness, they will still begin another: And yet so empty are all the Creatures, and courses that natural Men can take about them, that till men betake themselves to that new and living way to Happiness which the Scripture reveals, they will meet with nothing but endless Labour and continual disappointment, without any true settling or quietness to their minds: For Solomon speaking of their Writtings who mistake the Scriptures way to Happiness saith, of *making many Books there is no end.*

6. Though the Study of saving knowledge may prove wearisome to the Flesh, partly by Reason of our Dulness, and unacquaintance

quaintance with the grounds of consolation, and confidence of success; and partly because the Lord will have the wearying of the Flesh in that Study, a mean to promote mortification, and to divert the Heart from sinful delights, yet that study is sweet of it self, and is the very rest and refreshment of the Soul, yea it is Health to the Spirit, and Marrow to the Bones; and in comparison of it all other Studies are spending and wearisom even to the Flesh: For, this study must be rest and sweetness, seeing it is of other Studies only that Solomon affirms this, *much Study is a weariness to the Flesh.*

Ver. 13. *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*

Here is the last Article of the Conclusion of this Book, containing the summ of Solomons Scope in the whole, especially in these directions which he had given for attaining to true Happiness. And this summ he doth first press upon his own Heart, and the Hearts of all others, and so Labours to fasten it as a Nail there, and as that which the whole purpose of this Book aims at.

Secondly, He Branches out this summ in two exhortations. The first is, *to the Fear of God*, which sometimes in Scripture is put for the Whole Worship and Service of God, *Isai. 29. 13.* but being here distinguished from the keeping of the Commandments, which comprehends all the Worship of God, it is to be understood of that inward *Filial* reverence and awe of God; which the Lord hath promised in the Covenant of Grace to put in the Hearts of his People, whereby out of a believing consideration of the greatness and sovereignty of God *Jer. 10. 6. 7.* his goodness to them in Christ *Hos. 3. 5.* especially his proneness to pardon their failings *Pf. 130. 4.* they do depart from what they know offensive to their Father *Prov. 16. 6.* and aim,

aim at what is well pleasing in his sight *Philip. 2. 12.* in humble confidence making use of Christs Merits to cover their Imperfections, and make them acceptable to God *Psal. 5. 7.* The Second Exhortation is to the keeping of his Commandements, whereby is not meant a legal perfect obedience, which Solomon knew to be impossible, he being so well acquainted with Original Corruption *Eccles. 7. 20. 29.* but a sincere and constant aim at conformity to the will of God, without exception of any of his Commands, and that because they are his.

And Thirdly, He presseth this Study by two Arguments, The First is, in this verse, that *this is the whole duty of man*, or as the Words are in the original, *this is the whole of Man*, to wit his main task, or a compend of all that God requireth and worketh in his own, and wherewith they should be wholly taken up all their Life-time, as they desire to be truly happy here and hereafter.

Hence Learn. 1. It is necessary for Christs Ministers that they have some certain Scope relating to the practice of the Lords people, at which they should aim in all that they deliver unto them, and in the close of any discourse or part of their pains, they should labour to leave some impression thereof as a Nail fastened in their Hearts: For so doth Solomon here sum up his Scope in this Book, and labour to fix the same in the Hearts of all men, *let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter.*

2. Whatever duty Ministers press upon people in order to their peace and Happiness, they should imprint the same upon their own Hearts, and become Learners of these Lessons they hold out to others, not binding heavy Burdens upon Mens Backs which they touch not with one of their Fingers: For Solomon here makes himself a Hearer and Learner of his own Doctrine, while he saith *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter, fear God, &c.*

3. No Man will ever be such a proficient in the Study of

of the fear and obedience of the Lord, as that he will not need to Learn more, and to advance in that study: For, Solomon was now near the close of his days, and at a good degree of perfection in that study, and yet he incites himself, and those who are farthest advanced, to greater progress herein, *fear God and keep his Commandments.*

4. They that would see good Days and live in the Light of the Lords Countenance, must Learn to be in his fear all the day long, intertaining the Faith of his Greatness and Goodness, that so they may be kept from these things which impede their fellowship with him, in which their felicity consists; For, while he sums up his directions for attaining to true Happiness, which he had proven impossible to be found in things Earthly, and only to be had in fellowship with God reconciled in Christ, he gives this for one principal part of that sum *fear God.*

5. Mans true Happiness is only to be found in keeping of the Commands of God, he cannot expect a sweet meeting with God, *Isai. 64. 5* nor the comfortable manifestations of his Love *Joh. 14. 21. 23.* but in that way, for this is the other part of the sum of his directions for attaining to true Happiness which consists in Communion with God, *keep his Commandments.*

6. The fear of the Lord is the root and principle of all right obedience to him, without which Men cannot act or move acceptably in any commanded duty: Therefore he presseth the Study of the fear of God in order to acceptable obedience, *Fear God and keep his Commandments.*

7. Where the fear of God is in the Heart, there will be also a care of keeping his Commands manifested in the practice, and that fear will evidence it self by some endeavour after a futable walking to his Commands: For the keeping of the Commandments here pressed, may be looked on as the evidence and fruit of the fear of God, *Fear God, and keep his Commandments.*

8. How-

8. However Men that seek their Happines in this Earth do look upon the Study of the fear and obedience of the Lord, as no part of their business in order to the attaining of their fancied Happines, but rather an impediment in the way to it *Mal. 3. 14.* yet this same Blessed Study is the great end for which man was made, the only study that is worthy to have his Spirit wholly Exercised about it, so as all his other Studies ought to be subordinat to this: And the consideration hereof should be a strong motive to put him to it, as is imported in this Reason; *For this is the whole duty of man.*

Ver. Last, *For God shall bring every work into Judgement, with every secret thing whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

THe last Reason whereby he presseth this blessed Study of living in the fear and obedience of the Lord is taken from the certainty and exactness of the last Judgement, at which time, both Mens more open and visible actions, and their more secret plots, and closest contrivances, of what sort soever whether good or bad, shall be brought forth, to receive sentence, Reward, or punishment according to their nature: And therefore they that desire to be truly happy here and hereafter, would leave off the pursuit of Earthly Vanities and sinful delights, and apply themselves to this Study, *to fear God and keep his Commandments, which is the whole duty of Man.*

Hence Learn. 1. The best of Gods Children may have their Hearts sometimes so hardened, and so averse from his fear, and the duties of new obedience, that they had need to have that dreadful day of Judgement represented to them, as one of the *Goods* formerly mentioned, to keep their Hearts in aw, and to excite them to their Duty: For this Reason is held out as useful to be considered by all that desire to be truly happy, and as that whereby *Solomon* prest upon his own Heart the study

study of living in the fear and obedience of the Lord : For God will bring every work into Judgement, &c.

2. So exact will the last Judgement be, that no action or purpose of Men shall escape the Cognizance and Sentence of the Judge in that day, their publick Sins shall then be published to all, and their secret Sins, even these of their Hearts, which they have gotten altogether hid from the Eyes of the World, and which they studied along their Life to hid them from their own Consciences, by neglecting to search them out, and Mourn for them, shall then be laid open; the consideration whereof, should deter Men from secret Sins: For (saith he) *God will bring every work into Judgement with every secret thing.*

3. Although the best actions of the Godly considered in themselves, cannot abide the Tryal of Gods Judgement *Psalm 143. 2.* by reason of the sinful mixture which is in them, *Isai. 64. 6.* And so they shall not come into Judgement or Condemnation *Rom. 8. 1.* yet as they are perfumed with Christs merits, and made perfect by him, in whom Believers are compleat *Col. 2. 10.* they shall be brought forth to Judgement to receive the reward of Grace which the righteous Judge shall give in that Day: For (saith he) *every work shall come into Judgement, whether it be good &c.*

4. All the evil actions of Men which they now refuse to look upon, that they might Mourn, and make use of the Blood of Christ for cleansing of them, shall in that great day be set in the light of their Countenance, and made patent for their shame and terrour before Men and Angels; that they may receive for them deserved Wrath to the utmost: This should be considered by Men when they are tempted to Sin, and by secure inapenitent Slighters of their former Wickedness; For, *God will bring every Work into Judgement, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

5. That last solemn action of the last Judgement, which will be in a manner between Time and Eternity, deserves
Mens

Mens most frequent and serious consideration, without which Men will never get their Hearts alienat from pursuing perishing Vanities, and Sinful Delights as their chief good, nor engaged to the study of true Piety: For as both the Old and New Testament closeth with representing to Mens Thoughts the last Judgement, and many particular Books of Scripture, so doth this Divine Preacher close his Book with it, as that which should be much in the thoughts of the Lords People, who should live so as they may daily desire to see this day, When *God will bring every Work into Judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Even so come Lord Jesus.*

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